

# GREAT CRAFTSMEN



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G. C. WILLIAMSON, LITT.D.

IVORY WORKERS

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DOSSETTER PHOTO.] [BRITISH MUSEUM

I. LEAF OF A DIPTYCH

Byzantine, fifth century

THE IVORY WORKERS  
OF THE  
MIDDLE AGES

BY  
A. M. CUST

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Published 1902.  
Cheaper re-issue, 1906.

TO MY DEAR FATHER  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.



## PREFACE

THIS little book can do no more than humbly touch the fringe of a large subject ; but if it leads the reader to a further study of this beautiful craft, it will have amply fulfilled its duty.

I must express my deep obligation to the magnificent volume on ivories by M. Emile Molinier, whose masterly arrangement of a very fragmentary and scattered subject is a model of lucidity ; and also to Dr. Hans Graeven, whose scholarly researches and excellent photographs are indispensable for a real study of the craft.

A. M. CUST.

*December, 1901.*



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# THE IVORY WORKERS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

## CHAPTER I

CONSULAR AND OTHER SECULAR DIPTYCHS

FROM the earliest dawn of the human race until our time, Ivory has held a first place as a material for making the pleasing little luxuries of life, religious or civil. Cave-Man has left behind him incised sketches of animals, the product of his leisure moments ; all literature tells of the use of it, and the digger's spade turns up a series of charming objects, from the ornamental hair combs of a prehistoric princess, who dazzled the Egyptian court some 7000 years B.C., to the ivory-handled walking-stick of some gouty old Greek who lived at the outset of this most prosaic era.

To this passion for carved ivory we owe our knowledge of the continuity of art for many centuries after the break up of the Roman Empire, and the almost complete cessation of monumental sculpture. In fact, no such continuous chain has survived in any other artistic production ; and this alone makes the study of the craft of such intense

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## IVORY WORKERS

interest, illustrating as it does the early quickening of art in a period of great obscurity between the old order and the new.

There is no real break between Classical art and that of the Middle Ages ; the early Christian was the last phase of Roman art, and the Church handed on with the Christian religion a mass of Judaic and Latin culture which the barbarian races, having none of their own, accepted, but through their different nature and requirements, modified and debased. Thence we see the continuity, and also the two main causes of the deterioration of Classical art: first, by the rise of Christianity, which was in its early days antagonistic to the plastic arts, owing to a haunting horror of images, inherited from Judaism, and a fear of falling back under the pagan spell of sensuous beauty : and though later and for a long period the Church became by far the most munificent and inspiring patron, the final tendency in the Eastern Empire was to stifle the true spirit of art by subjecting it to as dogmatic a rigour in design as in doctrine. Secondly the near presence of the powerful and rapidly assimilating barbarian, who imitating all things, often ignorant of their meaning, and incapable of good workmanship, reduced art in the Western Empire to the lowest ebb.

In Constantinople there lingered a fading shadow of the old Greek spirit, which, at least, inspired the craftsman to finished workmanship and a love of elegant form.

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

In spite of the paralysis caused by the enforcement of a fixed canon of iconography there were long periods of high artistic excellence (Figs. 17 and 18). We have an exaggerated idea of the rigidity of Byzantine art owing to the numerous repetitions by inferior craftsmen which are found in our museums, and by confusing the Golden Age, with the period of real deadness which commenced in the twelfth century, and has lasted to this very day in the art of the Greek Church. Byzantine art became the technical school of the younger nations, teaching them craftsmanship and design, thus enabling them to express their more impulsive religious emotions and leading them on till they found the full expression of their genius in the aspiring beauty of Gothic art.

The best period for commencing the study of mediæval ivory-carving is with the fourth century, A.D., and the great series of Consular Diptychs which form the backbone of the early history of the craft and created a type which lasted through the whole mediæval era.

Theodosius the Great (†395), divided the Roman Empire between his two sons. Arcadius ruled the Eastern Empire, his capital continuing at Constantinople. Honorius, then only eleven years old, nominally governed the Western. He did not make the Eternal City his seat of government, in fact the Imperial Court had rarely returned there since it was deserted by Diocletian. Milan was considered too exposed to the attacks of the

## IVORY WORKERS

barbarians, so the city of Ravenna, almost impregnable owing to the surrounding marshes, was chosen, and remained the capital of the varying rulers of Italy until the eighth century.

Two Consuls were chosen for the East and West, their names continuing to give the legal date to the year, according to the ancient custom. And though every vestige of political power was gone, the post was the object of much ambition, it being a personal favour of the Emperor, and conferring on the holder the highest rank. It also brought great popularity with the people, who still honoured the name of Consul, full of memories of the great republic, and still more passionately appreciated the Games in the Circus, which it was the expensive privilege of the Consul to inaugurate on his accession.

These Games were an occasion for great ostentation, and were carried out with lavish expenditure. First there was a procession of all the dignitaries of the city, in which the Consul was the most important figure ; this was greeted on its arrival at the amphitheatre by the tens of thousands of spectators starting up and clapping their hands ; then all were breathlessly still while the Consul, cynosure of every eye, flung down into the arena the small white napkin, or *Mappa Circensis*, with which he, and he alone, might signal the commencement of the games.

This was the psychic moment, and the scene has been preserved for all time on the carved ivory

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

diptychs which were presented by the Consul to the Senators and other high officials in commemoration of his office.

The word diptych is derived from the Greek *διπτυχον* or "double folded," and the diptychs given by the Consuls were an elaborate form of the ordinary writing-tablets or *pugillares*, "a thing held in the fist." They consisted of two pieces of ivory joined together like a book by hinges, decorated on the outside and grooved inside to hold the wax, which was written on by a sharp style. The most important leaf is the right hand one, or that which comes uppermost when the book is closed, on it, with a few early exceptions, the Consul's name was always inscribed, the second leaf bearing his titles.

These consular diptychs probably contained the *Fasti Consulares* or List of Consuls up to the year of the donor.

They were often gilded, the inscriptions being painted in red; and some were of great size, as the Byzantine Angel in the British Museum (frontispiece), which measures  $16\frac{1}{4}$  by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in., and is so large that no known tusk would suffice to cut it. It has been thought that the ancients possessed some secret for rolling out ivory or joining it invisibly; but it is more likely that elephants had not been so much killed down for the sake of their ivory, so larger tusks were obtainable.

These tablets were so costly that Theodosius decreed in 384 that they should only be given

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away by the *Consules Ordinarii*, or the Consuls admitted on the 1st of January and who named the year, and not by those who replaced them or by any other officials ; but this law was soon disregarded, and nine years later we read in a letter of the noble Roman Symmachus that, in honour of his son's elevation to the quæstorship he is sending to the very same Emperor a diptych set in gold.

This series of diptychs spreads over a period of about 150 years, from the end of the fourth to the middle of the sixth century. The sculpture steadily decreasing in value, the earliest examples show freedom of design and good work, but the last were nothing but indifferent repetitions of the same subjects, in bad proportion and worse relief till it became possible to produce a figure such as that of Orestes (Fig. 4). Soon after Orestes the Emperor Justinian abolished this ancient office, and, really, he must be held justified if all the consuls could do was to give bloodthirsty shows to the citizens, and still more corrupt the standard of art by distributing such despicable types of art among the provincials.

It is noticeable that all the fifth century diptychs, the earliest and the best, both consular and otherwise are from the West. By the end of the century there was a complete collapse, following the further invasions of the Huns and other barbarians, and the Western Empire flickered out with the suppression, by Odoacer the Goth,

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

of the last emperor, grotesquely named Romulus Augustulus, a sort of satire on his unworthy following of such mighty predecessors.

Orestes, Consul at Rome, 530 (Fig. 4), No. 34,<sup>1</sup> is the only Western Consul of the sixth century whose diptych has been preserved; the style is so like that of Constantinople, that it gives weight to Graeven's theory that the medallions on it represent Amalasuntha, daughter of Theodoric the Ostro-Goth, who was then ruling in the name of her young son Athalric, and who carried on that short renaissance of the Arts, so artificially introduced from Constantinople by her father. The busts cannot represent the reigning Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora, because at that time he was forty-eight years of age, and they never had a son.

Before passing to the real consular diptychs, it is impossible to leave unmentioned the splendid tablets of Probianus at Berlin (Fig. 2), No. 50.

We know no more than what the well-cut inscription tells us, that he was *VICARIUS URBIS ROMÆ*, or Vice-Prefect of the city of Rome. But, judging from the style, the good proportions (admitting the convention which made the person of highest rank the largest), the dignified faces, and the natural arrangement of the drapery, it must be of early date, probably towards the end of the fourth century, about the

<sup>1</sup> The numbers to the diptychs, in all cases, refer to those in the list of diptychs at the end of the book.

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[BERLIN MUSEUM]

2. SECOND LEAF OF THE DIPTYCH  
OF PROBIANUS  
End of fourth century

time of the beautiful tablets of the Nicomachi and the Symmachi (No. 58), to which it is closely allied by the well-hung drapery and the surrounding border of delicately cut honeysuckle pattern.

The top has a slight gable, as in the early diptych of Probus (Fig. 3), No. 2. Probianus is depicted in the Tribunal, sitting on his high-backed throne, surrounded by his clerks, who bear piles of writing tablets, and below, probably outside the *cancelli* or barrier, which is to be found in all Roman basilicas, stand the litigants, who appear to be

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

congratulating him. Outstretched fingers, in early art, meant the act of speech, and then, as now, congratulatory addresses were inscribed and presented. On the second leaf we see the address on his knee, and by a curious convention he is writing with his own hand the words they acclaim him with, "PROBIANE FLOREAS."

In the first leaf he is delivering judgment, and the two lower figures wear the toga, showing they are of high rank, and on the



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[AOSTA CATHEDRAL  
3. FIRST LEAF OF THE DIPTYCH OF  
PROBUS

## IVORY WORKERS

other both he and the litigants are arrayed in the chlamys of ordinary folk. Below, between the litigants is seen a mysterious object on a tripod stand, which some say is the *clepsydra* or water-clock, and others declare to be the official inkpot. On the right of the Vice-Prefect is a curious standard-like erection called the *vexilla regalia*, on which was painted the portraits of the Emperor and Empress, and which was never absent from any important ceremonial.

The diptych first on Molinier's list covers an antiphonary in the Treasury of the Basilica at Monza, which contains so many other interesting antiquities.

Legend tells us that this ivory was sent about the year 600 to the Lombard queen, Theodolinda, by Pope Gregory the Great in acknowledgment of her efforts to convert her very barbaric subjects from the Arian heresy to Catholicism.

Three figures are represented, a bearded soldier and a stately lady, who has with her a little boy. It is evidently a portrait group, and has given rise to many questionings; and among the names of the numerous historical personages connected with it are those of the general Constantius, his wife, the famous Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius I., and their little son, afterwards Valentinian III. This would place it towards the end of the first twenty-five years of the fifth century. This theory is quite possible, historically; but, judging from the style, the attribution of Molinier is

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

more likely. He considers that the figures represent another trio who lived a quarter of a century earlier. The decadence in art was so exceedingly rapid that it is very doubtful if such good craftsmanship and originality of design were possible at the later period. Molinier suggests that the carving represents the great general Stilicho, who though of Vandal origin, raised himself to a position of great power. He faithfully served Theodosius I., and the Emperor on his deathbed intrusted to him the care of his two young sons.

Stilicho, however, finding his influence in the Eastern Court was checked by Rufinus, concentrated his energies in the West, and practically ruled the Western Empire, and his weak young son-in-law, the Emperor Honorius. He kept the invading hordes at bay by conquest and treaty till his fall in 408, in which year the three persons depicted on these tablets—Stilicho, his wife Serena, adopted daughter and niece of Theodosius I., and their young son, Eucherius, were all cruelly murdered. This attribution would date it about 400, and an examination of the style supports the idea. The proportions are good, and the drapery well rendered, especially Serena's girdled tunic. The whole design shows originality, and the figures being portraits, the craftsman was thrown on his own resources and could not copy from classical sculpture.

The pose of the figures is somewhat uneasy, and contrasts unfavourably with the grace of the

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Bacchantes on the beautiful private diptych, part in the Musée de Cluny, and part in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 58), which probably formed the cover of a marriage contract between the families of the Nicomachi and the Symmachi. These tablets, though nearly of the same date, adhere closely to some Greek model, and though gaining much in beauty, lose in originality.

Camille Jullian in an interesting article<sup>1</sup> points out how in the midst of thoroughly Roman surroundings, it is only the energetic face of Stilicho which is not Roman in type and betrays his barbarian origin.

The short tunic worn by Stilicho is embroidered all over with pictures of his wife and son, his long chlamys having only portraits of the boy. It was a popular custom at this period to have the portraits of near relations embroidered on State garments, especially pictures of children. The poet Claudian in his panegyric on Stilicho, alludes to scenes from the lives of Eucherius and his little sisters being embroidered on the robe of their father. More often the portrait was on a square of stuff, or segment, which was let into the front of the garment (see Fig. 5).

The first diptych of certain date is that of Probus, Consul at Rome, 406, No. 2 (Fig. 3), and probably intended as a gift for the Emperor Honorius, who is depicted thereon as a figure of

<sup>1</sup> *Mélanges de l'Archéol. et d'Histoire*, Rome, 1882.

## CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

heavy proportions, borrowed from the common type of imperial statue. The head is evidently a portrait, as even at the most decadent period there was always a striving, even if an unsuccessful one, after portraiture and naturalism.

It is interesting to note the nimbus round the head of Honorius. In heathen times the nimbus was given to the immortals<sup>1</sup> and to images of the deified emperors. Christian art adopted it, but not invariably, and it appears to have been regarded more as an attribute of power than saintliness. Though Christ and his disciples and the Old Testament<sup>2</sup> heroes received it, it also encircled the heads of the great people of this world. We find it on the celebrated Justinian mosaics at S. Vitale in Ravenna, and on the medals of Justinian, and as late as the eleventh century on the plaque of the Emperor and Empress, Romanus and Eudoxia, in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris (Fig. 20).

Next in date and infinitely coarser in execution is that of Felix, 428 (No. 3); the head is of a rugged type, and the Consul is represented standing alone at the door of his house. Asturias, 449 (No. 4), on the contrary, is throned high in front of a colonnade and accompanied by two attendants. In the tablet, however, of the Consul Boethius, 487 (No. 5), we see for the first time

<sup>1</sup> See the figure of Circe in the Casa di Modesta, Pompeii.

<sup>2</sup> See the Joshua Rotulus, edited by the Directors of the Vatican Library, Rome.

## IVORY WORKERS



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, LONDON]

4. FIRST LEAF OF THE DIP-  
TYCH OF ORESTES, 530 A.D.

the Consul seated, *mappa* in hand, signalling the commencement of the games; but the design on the two leaves still has some variation, and on the second leaf he stands without the *mappa*. The diptych of Sividius, 488 (No. 6), furnishes the earliest example of the tablets of simpler type, which were probably given to people of lower degree. It is decorated by an inscribed medallion surrounded by foliated scrolls and four rosettes. All these are from the Western Empire.

With the commencement of the sixth century and the diptych of Areobindus, Consul at Constantinople, 506, we change to the Eastern Empire and find the formal type already fixed (see Fig. 4).

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The Consul is seen sitting on the *sella curulis*, or consular chair. This has no back, and is usually made of ivory, with elaborately carved masks and claws of lions, and sometimes has small figures of Victory on the arms. On it is a richly embroidered cushion, rather ostentatiously showing; for to sit on a cushion in the Circus was only allowed to certain privileged classes. His feet rest on the *scabellum*, or stool, and he is clad in his gorgeous festival robe, which is a development of the purple triumphal garb of the victorious generals in earlier days.

The component parts of this dress are still under discussion, but according to Meyer<sup>1</sup> they consist of four parts:

1st. The *paenula*. A long plain under-robe with long narrow sleeves;

2nd. The *colobium*. A shorter embroidered over-tunic, with half length wide sleeves;

3rd. An embroidered strip, which is laid over one shoulder and hangs down before and behind;

4th. A nameless wrap of lighter material, embroidered or woven in a pattern.

The complete dress was called the *trabea* or *toga picta*.

Wilpert,<sup>2</sup> however, declares that Nos. 3 and 4 are one long piece equal to the ancient toga: without which, by a decree of 382, the Senators were forbidden to appear in public, and which by more

<sup>1</sup> *Zwei Antike Elfenbeintafeln*, Munich, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Arte*, 1898.

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and more folding was reduced into the narrow Byzantine *lorum*. The feet were covered with red leather shoes, fastened by crossed ribbons with falling ends.

The Consul holds in his right hand the *mappa circensis* and in his left the *scipio* or sceptre. These sceptres are crowned by many devices—an eagle, busts of the imperial family and even two sitting figures.

As in the diptych of Orestes, there are often two female personifications of Rome and Constantinople; the former, on the Consul's right hand, holds a tessera in her right and a spear in her left hand. Her helmet has three crests, while that of Constantinople only one. The latter holds up her right hand and bears a shield or standard in the left. These cities are sometimes represented in little medallions on the Consul's chair (No. 17).

Very often above the head of the central figure were medallions with the portraits of imperial personages, or, perhaps, renowned ancestors. These niches were designed in imitation of those wooden shrines in which Roman households kept the waxen busts of their ancestors. Sometimes these diptychs were finished with a cross, and some have a medallion with the bust of Christ (No. 36).

The upper part was inscribed with the name and titles of the Consul, the last name always denominating the year.

Some early tablets have the name in the genitive, always a sign of antiquity, as *Nicomachorum*

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and *Symmachorum* (No. 58), *Felicis* (No. 3), *Lam-padorium* (No. 33), and the plain tablets bearing the name *Gallieni Concessi V.C.*

*V. Inl.* or *Vir Inlustris*, *V. C.* or *Vir Clarissimus*, and even *Patric.* or *Patrician*, were personal titles and not hereditary. They denoted that the bearer had held high office. We also find *Præfector*, and *Comes domesticorum equites*, or commander of the imperial bodyguard. To be called *Vir spectabilis*, or a respectable man, was then esteemed a high honour, while in our degenerate days it is almost considered an insult. But *Cons. ordin.* or *Consul ordinarius* was the real dignity, and with one exception always stood last.

In the lower division of the Orestes tablet, two servants pour money from sacks, doubtless commemorating the Consul's largesse to the people. In some diptychs they scatter prizes for the Games, and often there are lively representations of the chariot races (No. 33), and the fights with wild beasts. Areobindus has left us the most varied pictures. A row of spectators look on at the struggling gladiators (No. 9), or *Bestiarii* fighting with all sorts of wild beasts, lions and bears (No. 7), a bull-fight (No. 10), and on an anonymous dip-tych at Liverpool (No. 51), five magnificent elans are being attacked by hunters.

The fights do not appear to have been very dangerous for the men; the scenes are often quite comic from the numerous precautions taken, especi-

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ally on the Basilewsky tablet at St. Petersburg (No. 52). The fighters, carefully packed in leather protectors, bolt through doors with peep-holes, or climb into a sort of crow's-nest, curling up their ferocious opponents at the end of extremely long spears. In fact there was every means of escape, trap-doors, turnstile exits, and even dummy figures to divert the attention of the animals. Perhaps it was necessary, for we read of Pompey providing six hundred lions for a single show, and of Trajan celebrating his Dacian victories by the slaughter of eleven thousand beasts. If these little precautions had not been taken, the entertainment might have ended abruptly, and more in favour of the lower animals than the lords of creation.

The fights of the gladiators represented on the Besançon tablet must have been more exhibitions of skill than struggles to the death.

These gladiatorial fights ceased after the generous act of the monk Telemachus. He, after travelling to Rome from the far East with the set purpose, stept down into the arena, at the triumphal games of the Emperor Honorius (404), and tried to part the combatants. He was stoned to death by the enraged multitude; but his death was not unavailing, for his memory was respected, and these degrading exhibitions were for ever abolished.

Basilus, Consul at Constantinople, 541, was the last of the Consuls before the Emperor Justinian, impatient of the empty show of power, ab-

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sorbed the office among his other titles, and from that time the Emperors always went through the form of being made Consul once on their accession. Basilius is represented on the first leaf of his diptych (No. 37) standing by the figure of Constantinople, who holds a standard on a gigantic pole. Below is a minute chariot race. On the second leaf, which has been cut, a figure of Victory holds an oval medallion portrait of the Consul. Below is an eagle with outstretched wings. These two leaves, though widely separated, were proved to be a pair by the likeness of the thin sickly face of the Consul on each leaf. This diptych varies considerably from the contemporary design, and though all idea of the real structure of the body, and of the hang of drapery from the limbs has disappeared, still it shows so much originality and clever portraiture, that Graeven, after a careful consideration of the fashion of the dress, attributes it to an earlier Consul Basilius of 480, at a time before the grouping had become so stereotyped.

The number of these carvings given away was so considerable that all were not of the same richness. There are many tablets of simpler design and rougher make, several being smaller and in camel bone (No. 43). These were, as already stated, intended for persons of lower degree.

The decoration consisted usually of a medallion, inscribed, or with the bust of the Consul, surrounded by foliated scrolls (Areobindus has left several of this latter kind among his numerous

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diptychs). The Barbarini leaf has a charming variation, the bust being inclosed in a garland bound with hanging ribbons (No. 41). Some are fully inscribed (No. 35), and others have only a monogram like that formed from the Greek letters of the name Areobindus (No 12).

Justinianus, Consul at Constantinople in 541, and afterwards Emperor, has, in addition to his names, a Latin dedication framed in a circular moulding of delicate honeysuckle pattern. The diptych of Philoxenus at the Bibliothèque nationale (No. 29) is quite a new departure. Three medallions, linked by knotted cords, contain the portrait of the Consul, his name and titles in Latin, and below, a female bust, who, some think, represents his wife. She is more likely to be the personification of Constantinople, judging from the absence of the fashionable headgear, the hair being simply parted under a narrow diadem, and from the standard she grasps in her hand, which is embroidered with a garland in the same fashion as that held by Constantinople in the Basilius diptychon. The faces are well characterized and the whole workmanship is excellent, round it is an elaborate border, the spaces being filled in by a Greek verse, which runs as follows :

“I Philoxenus being Consul, offer this present to the wise Senate.”

There is a simpler diptych of this Consul at Liverpool, which bears a Greek dedication to a friend.

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The most important among the anonymous consular diptychs is the fine one preserved in the Cathedral Treasury at Halberstadt (No. 38) on which the bearded Consul stands among his friends, the group being varied on each leaf. Above, in a narrow division, are two small imperial figures seated on a wide throne with the figures of Rome and Constantinople; at the back stands a Victory, as in the similar design on a coin of Theodosius I. Below, in another narrow division, are pathetic groups of captive barbarians. The inscription has been cut from the top, but the whole style points to an early date, and Meyer places it between those of Asturias and Boethius in the third quarter of the fifth century.

The tablet of Lampadius at Brescia is especially interesting for the large picture it gives of a chariot race, showing the quadrigas rushing past the *spina* or turning post.

The Consul, clad in the *trabea* sits with two companions behind the richly carved *cancelli* or balustrade. The only similar representation is on the magisterial diptych at Liverpool (No. 51), but the identification is very confusing. In the Brescia tablet the central *trabea*-clad figure and the man on his left both hold the *mappa*, but on that at Liverpool there is, more reasonably, only one starter, but he is on the left of the central figure, who holds a libation cup instead of the *mappa*, and all three figures have the same un-consular dress. Meyer points out an inscription announc-

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ing the restoration of the Flavian Amphitheatre by Caecina Felix Lampadius, in the second half of the fifth century; the inscription being in the genitive is also a sign of antiquity. But the smooth and rather too minute workmanship connect it with the best diptychs of the early sixth century, and so Molinier attributes it to Lampadius, Consul at Constantinople in 530, and the same year as our old friend Orestes (Fig. 4), and the smooth finish of the Lampadius tablet can be contrasted, not altogether unfavourably, with the rougher modelling of what had become by then almost a provincial school.

The nameless consular diptych of Bourges (No. 39), divides into two equal registers. Above, the bearded Consul is seated between two guards, on one leaf these have long hair, and may have been intended for Goths, and in the corners of the arch are two eagles exactly like those on the St. Gregory diptych at Monza (No. 44). In each lower half is a *bestiarius* transfixing lions and leopards with his spear. The treatment, if rough, is free, and the grouping of the lions is somewhat similar to that in the Adam tablet at the Bargello (Fig. 6). It is probably fifth or early sixth century.

Meyer quotes the text of Gregory of Tours, who describes the installation of Clovis the Frankish king as Consul of the West in 508, with all the pomp and honour of Roman custom, and repeats the rather problematic suggestion that this diptych commemorates the occasion.

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The ivory tablet in the British Museum, called the Apotheosis of Romulus, from a very doubtful reading of the monogram, is probably also of the fifth or even sixth century, though its thoroughly heathen subject seems to necessitate an earlier date. The composition is most elaborate. Below, the Consul, clad in the toga, is seated in an architectural triumphal car drawn by four elephants, each with their driver. In the centre he is seen in miniature driving in a quadriga, which bears him upward, preceded by eagles, from the funeral pile to the heavens, where he is again represented in the hands of winged genii, who present him to the assembled gods.

This is interesting as being an example of that continuous method of composition, in which the same figure is repeated acting in sequence. This method was introduced into Roman art about the Augustan age, and was largely continued by Christian art, especially in the MSS. It gained great popularity, and for a while it seemed doubtful whether the "continuous" or the "episodic" method would be the leading feature in modern art.<sup>1</sup>

Several consular diptychs have been turned to Christian religious uses by slight alterations of the figures, and by the removal of inscriptions and scenes from the games.

The most important transformed diptych is in

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Art*, Wickhoff, Eng. trans. by Mrs. A. Strong.

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the Cathedral Treasury at Monza (No. 44), which now represents St. Gregory and King David. The alterations have been considerable, and have given rise to many differences of opinion, but the latest writers, with the exception of Meyer, have gone back to the opinion of the earliest, Gori, who declared the consular origin of these tablets.

St. Gregory did not die till 604, so could not have been canonized before the seventh century, and the style is fully that of the consular diptychs in the first half of the preceding century. The saints are depicted in full consular robes, the right hand raised with the *mappa* in the act of flinging it into the arena, and in the left the *scipio*.

The background has the typical decorated arch, supported by cannelated pilasters, over the capitals of which are rectangular spaces having the names of Gregory and David cut with a deep background, as if to destroy any under carving. Above the arch is a cross similar to that on Fig. 4, on each side are two eagles of the Bourges pattern (No. 39). David sits on a curule chair, his feet resting on a stool in good consular fashion. On each side of the chair, above the leg, is a square with deep cut carving. These squares might have contained the now obliterated busts of Rome and Constantinople, which decorate that part on the diptych of Anastasius (No. 17). In fact the knot and twisted stalks almost follow the outlines of a head and shoulders. There is more deep carving let in a narrow groove between the pilasters and the

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smooth background, all of which has a Carlo  
vingian character.

St. Gregory has been given a tonsure and his hair has been cut at the expense of his ears, which have been cut away too. The robes are untouched, but Gregory's sceptre has been altered to a cross. Above the head of David are faint traces of an inscription on the smooth background, and on the other leaf there is a later inscription referring to Gregory's Antiphonary, to a copy of which the tablets formerly acted as a cover.

On a reliquary book cover at Prague is another consul changed into St. Peter (No. 45). This figure has suffered considerably, for the *trabea* has been so much smoothed that it is hardly distinguishable. The *mappa* has been turned into a *volumen* or roll, the *scipio* into a key, and the feet have been bared.

There appears to have been a class of diptychs, each leaf consisting of five pieces joined together by ivory beading or metal mountings. The four pieces were arranged like a frame round the central and most important plaque. (See the later Christian book cover, Fig. 10.) Meyer suggests they were especially intended for gifts to members of the imperial family.

Some of these five-piece panels were more probably intended as book covers, but one undoubted consular diptych in five parts still survives, though the pieces are scattered. Two horizontal strips are in the collection of the Marchese di Trivulzio at

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Milan. The upper one, with a bust of Constanti-nople borne by two winged figures, is inscribed with a dedication to an Emperor, while the lower strip, which is carved with barbarians rushing forward to present tribute (the same motive as that of the Magi), bears the Consul's titles.

Two upright pieces of slightly varying width, on a book cover in the Munich Library, represent a consul in the act of walking to his right, and carrying what is probably a congratulatory address to the Emperor, his hands being religiously veiled. Above and behind him is an Imperial Guard, with large shield and spear, his robe embroidered on the shoulders, and his neck encircled by a collar from whence hangs a bulla, just as we see them on the mosaic in St. Vitale at Ravenna.

The narrower piece has a rigidly vertical design. Below is the full face figure of a man holding a long staff, and above, the upper portion of a figure of Victory, holding up over her head a wreath containing a bust of the Emperor, the exact enlargement of those Victories which so often stand on the arms of the curule chair (No. 17).

Meyer considers that these two unequal pieces formed the two sides, but the complete want of balance in the composition makes Molinier's opinion that they both formed the right side the more probable. This increases the number of pieces to seven, but the Victory having no border may have been sawn off the central plaque. On the other hand, in the five-piece panel at Ravenna

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(Fig. 10), the central plaque is divided horizontally by a beading, if not in two separate pieces. If we consider that these two pieces formed the right side, and multiply their combined width for the left side, and then compare the total of the two sides with the width of the horizontal strips, there is still ample space for a central plaque representing the Emperor.

Meyer adds to the list of diptychs the celebrated five-piece tablet in the Barberini Library at Rome. The upper and lower strips are of exactly the same character, and in the central plaque the Emperor (probably Constantine the Great) is seen on a rearing horse, under whose feet is a woman with her lap full of fruit, who personifies some conquered country. In the left piece is the figure of a soldier bringing a Victory, and the other side, which should have a representation like the Munich Consul, is lost.

Molinier emphatically declares this could not have been a consular diptych, as there is no trace of inscription; but suggests that it was the cover of a book intended for the Emperor.

There is one more diptych in exceedingly high relief, which may possibly be classed among the consular series, the date and subject of which is still a matter of much discussion. One leaf is in the Bargello at Florence (Fig. 5), and the other in the Vienna Museum (No. 57).

The Florentine portion represents a personage clad in a robe blazing with jewels, and standing

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under an elaborate edifice, holding orb and sceptre. The Vienna leaf is practically the same, only the figure is seated on a throne set with precious stones, and extends the right hand in the same manner as the Empress Eudoxia on Fig. 20, whilst the left hand supports the orb. The sex of this personage was long disputed, but now it is considered by most writers to represent a woman, both from the modelling of the form and from the dress.

The robes of Emperor and Empress were very similar, but on examining the mosaics of St. Vitale at Ravenna, we find that though Justinian and Theodora both wear the *chlamys*, hers is more lavishly decorated, and she wears a large collar of pendant jewels, while Justinian has the *fibula*. But the head-dresses were always tolerably distinctive till considerably later. Ladies of high rank all wore a kind of wig-like turban, sometimes double, as in the case of Serena (No. 1). That it was a turban and not hair is evident from the striped pattern on that of Serena. This was often bound with jewels, and the imperial family wore diadems with long strings of jewels hanging over the ears, as on the Bargello tablet. These pendants were often, but not invariably, worn by the Emperor, but his diadem fitted close on to his forehead without the intervening wig, as we see on the interesting ninth century casket in the Museo Kircheriano in Rome, where both head-dresses are represented. A large segment is inserted on

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the front of her robe by a jewelled edging, on which we see the portrait of a chubby boy dressed in the *trabea*, and wielding *mappa* and *scipio*, a diadem with pendants being on his head.

Having decided that the figure is intended for a lady, there remains the vexed question of who she is. Molinier thinks she is of Byzantine origin, not wrought with the delicate art of the tenth to the eleventh centuries, but earlier and coarser, and going through the various historic characters in search of a name, he attributes the portrait to the Empress Irene, widow of Leo IV., and long Regent for her ten-year-old son Constantine IV., for she alone would dare to be portrayed throned, and with all the attributes of sovereignty. It was Irene who, in the middle of the Iconoclastic period, convened a council of the Church, repealed the new laws, and encouraged the use of religious images throughout her realm.

This attribution would bring the date of the diptych down to the end of the eighth century, and later than the style would seem to warrant; and it is vigorously opposed by Graeven, who declares that after the first half of the sixth century, there were no more purely secular representations; and that the coins of Irene represent her with both diadem and sceptre surmounted by a cross.

To this may be added the affinity of the architecture with that on diptychs of the early sixth century, as the eagles on the top, which are exactly like those surmounting the Bourges (No.



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

5. LEAF OF THE DIPTYCH OF AMALASUNTHA (?)  
Italian, sixth century

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39) and St. Gregory (No. 44) diptychs. Also the columns with tightly wound curtains are extremely near in design to those on the tablets of the Poet and Muse at Monza (No. 63). Curtains, however, with horizontal stripes were fairly constant all through early art, but were less used in strictly Byzantine Art than in any other.

Graeven having given good reasons for placing this ivory in the first half of the sixth century, suggests that it represents Amalasuntha, daughter of Theodoric, who, by right of conquest and the reluctant consent of the Emperor of the East, was King of Italy from 493-526; and who, by good government, had brought about some measure of order, and induced a slight renaissance of the arts. Amalasuntha governed at Pavia in the name of her young son Athalric (Fig. 5).

Graeven suggests that these two are also represented in the medallions on the diptych of Orestes (Fig. 4). Athalric is represented without a diadem, like his grandfather on the gold medal, and he wears a coat in Gothic fashion, like that on the coins of Theodatus, his successor, and his mother's second husband. Amalasuntha attempted to control Theodatus in the same manner as her dead son, but he resented the interference and had her murdered, thus severing the last link with the enlightened *régime* of Theodoric, and plunging the country once more in darkness and barbarism.

There still remain for attention the Private Diptychs, which were given away to celebrate a

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marriage, or a happy recovery to health, or some other domestic reason. The subjects were usually mythological, and the compositions, sometimes of great beauty, were chiefly borrowed from Classical Art.

First, and by far the most beautiful, is the magnificent diptych of the noble families of the Nicomachi and the Symmachi; the two leaves are, respectively, in the Musée de Cluny at Paris and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The wonderful preservation of the surface shows the soft modelling of the ivory, and though the Paris leaf has been cruelly shattered and several pieces lost, the soft flow of the drapery is still sufficiently visible.

It is rather saddening to think of the long periods which must elapse in the history of ivory carving, from this time when drapery was still a thing of beauty, showing the form it seemed to hide, on through phases in which the garments were laid on in a series of flat lumps, or covered with a multitude of meaningless lines, until, finally, it emerges in Gothic art, no longer diaphanous and clinging, it is true, but drapery, real drapery, hanging in long swaying folds and falling round the feet in delicate little heaps in a manner whose perfection was the sole prerogative of the French craftsmen.

Between the Nicomachus diptych and the famous Diptychon Quirinalis of Brescia (No. 59), there is a great abyss. On one leaf of the latter are carved

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Hippolytus and Phædra, a poor copy of some Greek model ; on the other Diana and Endymion.

Meyer thinks it probable that in the representation of the chaste Diana, coyly saluting her lover under the chin, we may find the portrait of a Roman lady. Certainly the attitude of the lady's left hand, firmly placed on her hip, could have been copied from no Greek original, and further, these two figures have curtains behind them and embroidery on the shoulders of their tunics, after the popular fashion of the fifth and sixth centuries.

It is interesting to note the architectural background, an arch supported by two pilasters, which is very similar to that on the St. Gregory diptych, except that here the string-course which supports the scallop shell has not been cut away as in that at Monza.

Liverpool Museum has a fine pair of tablets representing Æsculapius and Hygeia (No. 61) ; which undoubtedly refer to recovery from an illness. The figure of Æsculapius appears to be taken from the Farnese Hercules. Another small ivory of this subject is in a private collection in Zurich ; the figures vary considerably, but are evidently of the same period—mid sixth century.

There is one more diptych in that wonderful collection in the Treasury of the Basilica at Monza ; representing an elderly bald-headed man, whose heavy torso and fat puffy face are well characterized, though the pose is rather awkwardly rendered. He appears to be a poet, for writing tablets and

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a *volumen* lie at his feet, and on the adjoining leaf we see a Muse playing on the lyre. But from her matronly figure and his uncompromising ugliness, we appear to be dealing with another of those portrait diptychs, like the one at Brescia, in which the noble Roman had his portrait taken in fancy dress.

There are two most interesting tablets now in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris, originally from Sens, where they long served as a binding to the thirteenth century MS. containing "The Office of Fools," or that read on the first day of the year, and in which was incorporated many customs derived from the Roman Saturnalia. The decoration is frankly pagan, and is somewhat similar in style to the sarcophagi of the third century, on which the various scenes are superimposed in much the same manner.

On one leaf Bacchus Helios is represented clasping a thyrsis in one hand and an empty wine-cup in the other, while he stands upright in a car drawn by a male and female centaur. Above are lively scenes of the vintage, little figures gathering grapes and gaily treading out the wine. At the bottom of the tablet a group of sea-gods are seen disporting themselves among dolphins and other fish.

In the centre of the other tablet Diana Lucifer, rises like the moon from the sea; she wears a crescent on her brow, and round her head floats a cloud of airy drapery. She carries a lighted torch,

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and the two bulls which draw her chariot bound rapidly upward out of the sea. Above are a satyr and nymph, some women, Cupid and the tiny figure of Venus in a shell, and below, lying on the waters, is a figure of the Sea, surrounded by fish and holding a curious crustacean in her hand.

These diptychs have passed through many vicissitudes during the lapse of time. In the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a later carving on the back of a mutilated consular diptych, from which the whole surface has been smoothed away, leaving only a deeper outline here and there. This gives an idea of the fate of a large number of carved ivories, and of our great loss ; and it is entirely to the adoption of diptychs for liturgical purposes by the Church that we owe the preservation of those that remain. The bishops, being high functionaries, may have received them as gifts, and others were votive.

The Council of Mopsueste, in 550, ordered the churches to keep the diptychs, and the names of those persons to be prayed for during the celebration of mass to be inscribed in them, in the following categories, all having a more or less local connection with the particular church :

Firstly : Neophytes, or newly baptized ;

Secondly : Benefactors, Sovereigns and Bishops ;

Thirdly : Saints and Martyrs ; and

Lastly : The Faithful Dead "in the sleep of peace."

People were very anxious to have their names

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inscribed, and fearful of being scratched out for heresy.

For the dead bishops the prayer was less for them, than to them, from which comes the word "canonize," or to be named in the Canon of the Mass. On the inner side of the diptych of Clementinus, at Liverpool, there is in roughly written Greek letters a prayer for the clergy of a church of St. Agatha, and for "our Shepherd Hadrian the Patriarch," who can be none other than Pope Hadrian (†795); this diptych probably came from a church in Sicily, for Greek was still spoken, and the patron saint of Palermo is St. Agatha.

Lists of bishops were inscribed, and when the list grew too long parchment leaves were inserted. Whole services were bound in these carvings, and the covers of many of the oldest MSS. are of diptychs, set in an elaborate border of goldsmith's work, to increase the size as well as to enhance the beauty.

## CHAPTER II

### LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

#### I. LATIN, LATINO-BYZANTINE AND THE EARLY BYZANTINE IVORIES

AT the end of the last chapter it was shown how the Church had preserved a large number of consular diptychs, either unchanged or altered to suit Christian iconography. To that list must be added several ivory carvings with religious subjects, yet so closely connected with the class of Private Diptychs, that it is more than probable that they also have undergone transformation.

The most important among these are a fragmentary panel in the Museo Civico at Bologna and the celebrated Ivory Book of Rouen Cathedral.

On the Bologna fragment is the figure of a bearded man of heavy type, in a well designed but poorly executed robe ; he clasps a roll in his left hand and beneath his neatly sandalled feet is a stool, always a mark of honour, in the side of which is a deepened space with the name "Petrus" rudely inscribed. Above, in the broken pediment, is a niche with the bust of a bearded man, labelled "Marcus." The whole is surrounded by a handsome ovolo moulding, as are also the panels of the

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Rouen Book Cover, which may be of a slightly later date, but they must both be placed early in the sixth century. The Rouen carvings represent St. Peter and St. Paul, without a doubt, for they are already of that iconographical type which had become fixed by the end of the preceding century, St. Paul with a bald head and long pointed beard, and St. Peter with thick hair and a round curling beard; but it is very likely that the figures on both the Bologna and Rouen tablets were originally intended for authors or poets as on the series of complimentary diptychs.

The architecture lends credence to this theory, the cannelated columns and pediment flanked by so-called "doves," being much the same as that on the various sixth century diptychs. The drapery too, has been copied from good models, that of St. Peter, with the right arm buried in the folds of his toga, is in imitation of the famous Lateran Sophocles. Another proof of alteration is the manner in which he holds a narrow key in a grasp wide enough to contain a roll as large as that in the Bologna fragment.

There is a diptych in Tongres Cathedral,<sup>1</sup> which has a history carrying it back to the ninth century. The names of the Bishops of Tongres from 855-959 being engraved on the back.

It evidently belongs to the large class of ivories of mixed Latino-Byzantine origin. The vine scroll

<sup>1</sup> Second leaf in the Royal Museum of Decorative and Industrial Art, Brussels.

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border, the flat relief and rather grooved working of the draperies, also the peculiar stockings and oriental shoes are all features of this class. St. Paul raises his hand to bless in the Greek manner, with only two fingers extended. The interpretation of this gesture is variously given, many say it is symbolical of the dual nature of Our Lord and of the Trinity.

Byzantine, equally with Italian art, sprang from the last *floraison* of Roman Art, and grew up at Constantinople, the New Rome, but much modified by Greek and Syrian influences. At first the culture of the two Empires was so linked together, that it is the merest shade which distinguishes Roman Art in the East and West. The division widens, and the two branches stretch out, one, the purely Latin, soon to wither and almost perish, and the other to grow into that spreading tree of Byzantine Art, whose branches have scattered fruit in every part of Europe and the Levant.

The latest bloom on the purely Latin branch, before it commenced to decay, included ivories of singular beauty, as the splendid casket at Brescia and the famous Carrand diptych in the Bargello at Florence (Figs. 5 and 6). This carving is of superb finish, worthy of the beautiful Bacchante diptych, though the design is less purely classical. The first leaf represents Adam in the Earthly Paradise, engaged in naming the animals, the figure is thoroughly Greek, and the

## IVORY WORKERS

treatment closely resembles an *Orpheus* scene, though the curiously crimped hair and heavy hands and feet betray a decline in art. The animals show delightful touches of first-hand observation, the worrying attitude of the little dog, who, forgetting he is in Paradise, is just going to bark at the dignified goat below. The droop of the bull's head as he grazes by the side of the Four Rivers is very natural, though the artist still adheres to the rather dry technique of animal portrayal in ancient art. These animals may be compared with those on the diptych of Bourges, which are scattered over the background in much the same way, but with less defiance of perspective, as they are supposed to be leaping in the act of fighting.

The object of much controversy is another fine Earthly Paradise carved on the back of an *Areobindus* diptych in the Louvre (No. 13). It is divided into registers by irregular lines of herbage ; above are Adam and Eve and the Serpent, next come a series of weird mythological creatures, and then follow serried ranks of animals, fabulous and otherwise. Molinier declares it cannot be later than the sixth century, and connects it with the Bargello diptych, but there is a real difference in the feeling and technique of the animals, and a bizarre element, quite foreign to the matter-of-fact and straightforward methods of ancient art. In the opinion of de Linas and Graeven, the carving was added in the early periods of the Italian Renaissance, and the former points out a connection



ALINARI PHOTO.]

6. DIPTYCH WITH THE EARTHLY PARADISE AND SCENES  
FROM THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL  
Italian, fifth century



[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

## IVORY WORKERS

with the carvings on the façade of Orvieto Cathedral.

The second leaf of the Bargello diptych is covered with three rows of exquisitely carved and well characterized figures. The top row may represent the meeting of Paul and Barnabas with Peter at Damascus. The next shows Paul at Malta, shaking the viper into the fire(Acts, xviii. 3), and remaining unhurt, to the surprise of Publius, governor of the island, who stands by dressed as a man of rank in a chlamys embroidered with a segment and fastened by a rich fibula. The soldier with the strange sleeved fur coat hung over his shoulders is probably one of the governor's guard. At the bottom we see the healing of the father of Publius, who lay sick of a fever.

The Lipsanoteca, or large ivory casket in the Museo Civico at Brescia, is a fine work of early Christian sculpture, and has far more connection with antiquity than with the early development of the art of the Middle Ages. But it is difficult to pass it by undescribed, as it gives the early types of so much that is met again in later art. Molinier classes it among the sixth century ivories of mixed style. But Westwood points out that the mingling of subjects from the Old and New Testament histories, and the small size given to some of them as border pieces, show the precise treatment of many early sarcophagi, also the classical nature of many of the details point to an early date, and he attributes it at latest to the

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

fourth century, with which date Graeven entirely agrees.

The casket has a frieze of fifteen heads in medallions, and in the narrow borders are the symbolical Types of Old Testament history. The large central scenes are from the New Testament, showing Christ as the Good Shepherd at the Gate of the Fold, and several of the miracles which became so popular on the Italo-Byzantine ivories, including the rarer scene of the *Raising of Jairus's daughter*, which has many features in common with the *Raising of Tabitha* on one of a series of three most interesting little plaques in the British Museum, notably in the treatment of the long waving hair of the attendant women. On the flat lid the Cycle of the Passion is most fully illustrated, but stops short with the scene in the Prætorium before the sad representation of the Crucifixion.

The great similarity between the art of the Eastern and Western divisions of the Roman Empire has already been mentioned, and it is this similarity which causes considerable difficulty in classifying the early ivories. The three British Museum plaques just referred to as having a close connection in the scene of the *Raising of Tabitha* to the Brescia casket, which is undoubtedly of Western origin, have also a strong resemblance to the first half of a diptych now in the Trivulzio Collection at Milan, both in the dress of the soldiers, and in the crouching figure of one of the Holy Women, which are almost identical on the

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two ivories. Molinier considers the Trivulzio tablet to be purely Constantinopolitan, but Graeven produces good evidence for connecting it with Latin sculpture.

This tablet is divided into two scenes from the first Easter Morn, the startled soldiers by the tomb of Christ, and the Angel appearing to the two Maries. The proportions are on the whole good, though inclining to the dumpiness peculiar to the reliefs on the sarcophagi. There are other details which betray the influence of these sculptures. The half opened door of the tomb is found on pagan coffins, and the dress of the soldiers, with the strange round head-gear, rather like a cook's cap, is often characteristic of the Jews, and is found on several of the sarcophagi. In the British Museum plaques the Israelites who stoop down to drink of the water from the rock wear exactly the same dress, treated in exactly the same manner, even to the ends of the chlamys, which fly out in rapid movement.

This dress is also found in a Codex (No. 286) at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and again on another set of plaques in the British Museum, which belonged to a casket, and are of a deep reddish colour. On these plaques the types of the Holy Women are the same as those on the Trivulzio tablet, and the crouching women in the *Raising of Tabitha* in the British Museum set of three. The Crucifixion (Fig. 7) belongs to the coloured set, and is the earliest representation

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known, excepting that on the carved wood doors of St. Sabina at Rome, which were made by Greek workmen for Pope Celestin (432-440), and the two conceptions have much in common in modelling and pose.

It should be noticed that the *titulus* is written only in Latin. A most important proof of the Latin origin of these ivories is the finely cut honeysuckle moulding which surrounds the door of the tomb in the Trivulzio tablet, and which is found both on the diptych of Probianus (Fig. 2) and on that of the Nicomachi family (No. 58). The tablet has another close connection with the Probianus diptych in the division of the surface into two tiers by the border, and the recognition of the existence of three dimensional space, by grouping the figures firmly on the ground. This knowledge was soon forgotten, and the figures on sculptures of scarcely later date float about one over the other without the artist being in the least troubled by the problem of the depth of inclosed space. The close connection with these diptychs points to an early date, probably not later than the first decades of the fifth century. The dividing border<sup>1</sup> is very common in Carlovingian ivories, and is, perhaps, one reason why Westwood and Stuhlfauth attribute the Trivulzio plaque to that epoch, but a comparison of the "space" arrangement, imperfect as it is, with any Carlovingian ivory,

<sup>1</sup> See the plaque with the *Judgment of Solomon* in the Louvre.

# IVORY WORKERS

clearly shows the superiority of the more ancient work.

After this time angels were rarely represented without wings; the absence of wings makes the beautiful nimbed angel on the Trivulzio plaque



DR. GRAEVEN PHOTO.]

[BRITISH MUSEUM

7. THE CRUCIFIXION  
Italian, commencement of fifth century

quite indistinguishable from the figures of Christ on the British Museum plaques with the Passion. It is interesting to note, just about the end of the fourth century, the earliest representation of the symbolism of the Apocalypse in the presence of

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

the Bull of St. Luke and St. Matthew's Angel. The round shape of the tomb, with the raised tiled roof, is a difficult point, it appears to be the germ of the elaborate circular edifice with a cupola which became such a feature in purely



DR. GRAEVEN PHOTO.]

[BRITISH MUSEUM

### 8. CHRIST LEAVING THE PRÆTORIUM

Italian, commencement of fifth century

Byzantine Art; but there were many circular tombs<sup>1</sup> in Rome for the artist to copy, and the huge round mass of the Mausoleum of Hadrian

<sup>1</sup> A round tomb with a cupola has been excavated in the Via Praestina, and the circular Church of S. Costanzo is the tomb of a daughter of the Emperor Constantine.

## IVORY WORKERS

consisted of a drum, raised on a square basis, and decorated with columns and statues in a rather similar manner to the tomb on the fine Byzantine plaque with the *Ascension*, in the Munich Museum.

Thus we find the two sets of plaques in the British Museum and the Trivulzio tablet closely connected with each other and in touch with the Brescia casket. The workmanship is not so good on the smaller pieces, but on the whole the drawing is fairly correct, the drapery well designed and falling in few and soft folds over the rather chubby forms ; and the whole technique is very different from the unyielding draperies and the too minute details of the consular diptychs.

Sculpture in ivory prospered, while that in marble declined. The fashion of sculptured marble sarcophagi had almost died out in the sixth century ; but the Latin types and traditions were carried on by a series of carved pyxes, till they gradually merged in the Latino-Byzantine Art.

These pyxes are little circular boxes made in Italy, and dating practically from the fifth and sixth centuries. Many were of pagan origin, and decorated with mythological subjects, some being used for the toilet requisites of Roman ladies ; and others were, doubtless, *accerae*, or boxes for holding incense for heathen worship, such as we see in the hand of the lovely Bacchante on the diptych of the Symmachi family in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Afterwards they found a place in

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

Christian liturgy, being used to hold the Reservation of the Host.

The most ancient and beautiful pyx of Christian origin is in the Berlin Museum. It was probably carved in the fifth century from good antique models; on it, Christ, posed like Probianus on his diptych, and represented as a beardless youth, is teaching the Apostles. St. Peter and St. Paul (who usually takes the place of Judas among the twelve) are seated at His feet. The apostle on the right of Christ raises his hand, just in the manner of a consul about to throw the *mappa*. On the other side is a very beautiful figure of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. The style is so completely that of the sarcophagi that when the design is drawn as a flat strip it could easily be mistaken for one. In the Bargello there is a well-carved pyx with a lively picture of the Angel appearing to the Shepherds, who, with their rough short garments and thick crooked sticks are typical antique figures and very like Joseph's brothers on the Throne of Maximian (Fig. 13). We also find on the Throne the strange basket chair in which the Virgin sits. The onward rush of the Magi, as they bear gifts to the Infant Saviour, is a very favourite motive in Byzantine Art. Their barbaric costume, of trousers and short girdled shirt, surmounted by a Phrygian cap, traces back all through ancient Greek Art, and, minus the cap, is still the summer dress of the Russian peasant.

A pyx in the Musée de Cluny (Fig. 9) is of

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interest, giving some of the same series of miracles that are found so repeatedly at this period, both in carvings and in the mosaics. The Healing of the Paralytic, who carries his bed, Restoring sight to the man born blind, the Woman of Samaria, the Raising of Lazarus, and the ever popular whale scenes from the Life of Jonah (Fig. 10).

The minds of the early Christians seemed turned away from the scenes of Christ's Passion and Death, and only dwelt on His human relations as a Teacher and Healer, and on His glorious position as "Pantocrator," Ruler of All. A great triumphal joy seems to break out in the glowing mosaics of the earlier basilicas, and again and again, Christ, the Mighty, the Ruler, is represented in enormous size on the glittering walls, and not a trace of His sufferings, which formed the chief theme of later art.

In the series of miracles Christ is nearly always represented as a young beardless man, with a slight smile, the hair sometimes cut short in Roman fashion, but more often at this period with clustering curls. This younger, or "Ideal" type is, perhaps, slightly the earlier, and we find it in the catacomb frescoes and the most ancient mosaics and sarcophagi. The so-called "Portrait" type of Christ, as a Nazarene, with long hair and beard and a grave face, tending to severity was employed at the same time and sometimes side by side in the the same decoration, as in the Ivory Book of St. Lupicien, and the mosaics of S. Vitale at Ravenna,

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

both sixth century. In each case He is figured as Pantocrator, this type being invariably bearded in Byzantine Art. On some few sarcophagi He is also represented with a beard.

Early in the third century there had been a sharp struggle about the appearance of Our Lord ;



[MUSÉE DE CLUNY, PARIS]

9. PYX, CHRIST RAISING THE PARALYTIC

Italo-Byzantine, sixth century

many sided with Tertullian, making Him of abject form, others with Jerome and John Chrysostom declared He conquered souls by His beauty. The latter opinion prevailed, as it agreed with the existing traditions of the beauty of the Immortals. It is interesting to note that during this controversy

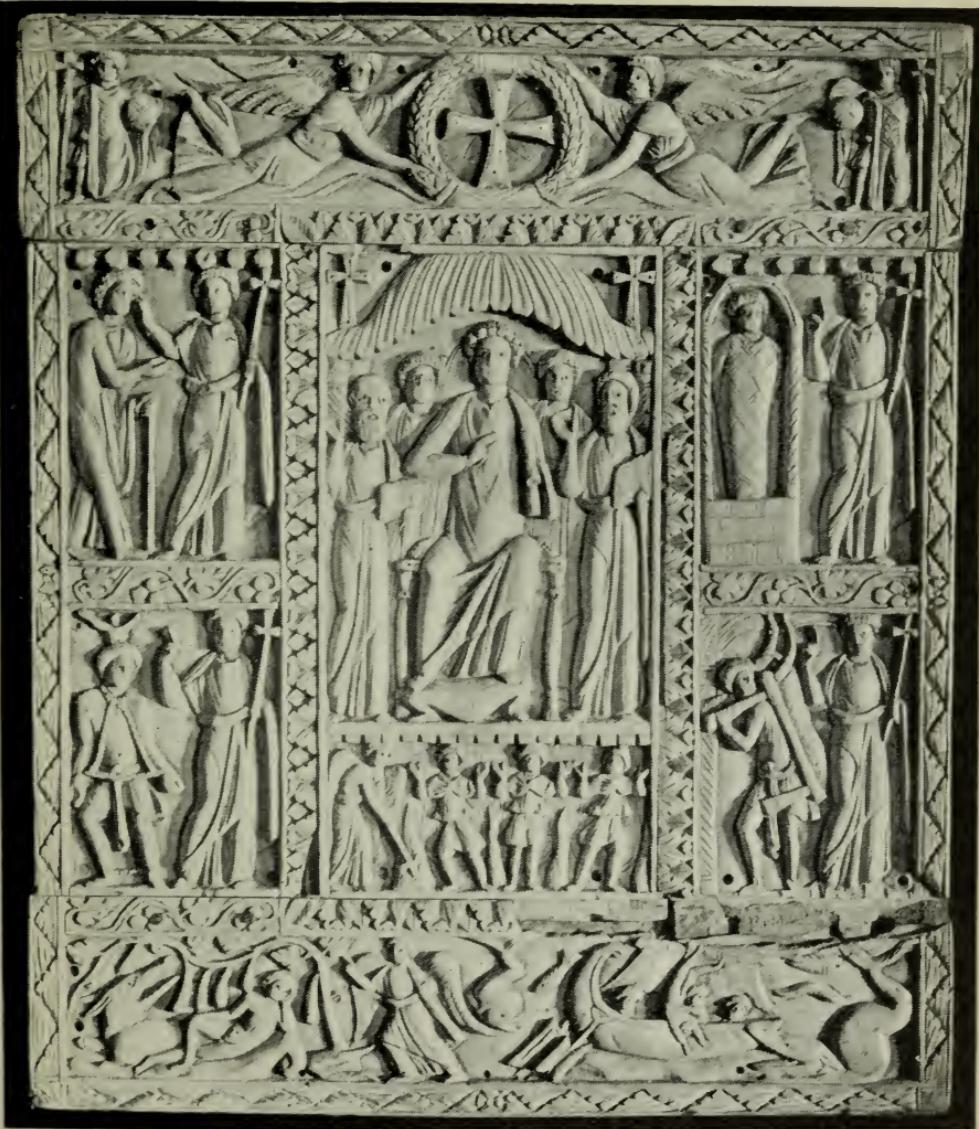
## IVORY WORKERS

no actual portrait was referred to, all the so-called portraits of Our Lord being of later date.

Fig. 10 is typical of a large group of ivory carvings of mixed origin. These book covers and the later pyxes are closely allied to the scenic pieces on the Throne of Maximian, though the technique is inferior, some being of very rough workmanship.

The arrangement of these panels is like that of the five-piece consular diptych mentioned in the last chapter, only the vertical side panels are divided into two pieces by a border. The three important examples of this kind of book cover are: this single panel from S. Michele di Murano, now in the Ravenna Library, the two panels of the Book of St. Lupicien, in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris, and the pair lately discovered by Dr. Strzygowski in the Patriarchal Library at Etsch-miadzin on the slopes of Mount Ararat.

The figures on the Murano panel are long and slight, and the modelling, though very barbarous, does round off to the background. Above are the well-known group of flying angels supporting a garland. These figures in the course of time have gone through a whole cycle of changes; starting from the flying Erotes who so commonly support the portrait of the deceased on Roman sarcophagi, they became clothed and elongated, as we see them here, and at last stripped and chubby again we find them on the tombs of the Medici, while their grown-up relations hover over many an Italian



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[MUSEUM, RAVENNA

10. COVER OF A BOOK OF THE GOSPELS, FROM S. MICHELE  
DI MURANO  
Italo-Byzantine, sixth century

## IVORY WORKERS

picture and sculpture. The peculiar dumpy dolphin is an interesting specimen of longevity, going through more than two thousand years of life from the Choragic Monument at Athens to a London Drinking Fountain without changing a line. The surprised gesture of the accompanying disciple (Fig. 9), and of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace (Fig. 10), is another of those delightful conventions that meet us at every turn in this most naïve group of sculptures. We meet it again in the St. Lupicien panels, which are very similar, but nearer in technique to the scenes on the Throne of Maximian. The subjects vary little, but instead of Jonah there is a charming picture of the Woman of Samaria standing by the well. The figure of Christ seated in the central panel is old and bearded, and it so closely resembles the St. John Baptist on the Throne (Fig. 12) that, except for the large cruciform nimbus, it might be taken for that saint. The workmanship is coarse and the hands are terribly large and ill drawn.

The drawing on the Etschmiadzin Book Cover, which is in the same style as St. Lupicien, is still more incorrect, the legs and arms of the flying angels being quite detached and merely placed in the drapery at suitable angles. The modelling is even worse, and goes in many places sheer down to the background from a surface covered with grooved lines. Yet the figure of the youthful Christ is not unpleasing, with the wide smooth face so characteristic of early Byzantine

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

art. The pose, with fingers raised to teach or bless, is taken directly from the Roman official type, and should be compared with the diptych of Probianus. The Virgin is accompanied by two angels, who, though without wings, can be recognized by their pointed diadems, which have been inherited by the angels in Italian painting.

There are a number of ivories of a double character, strongly influenced by Byzantine art yet not so closely allied to the Ravenna Throne as those already mentioned. The magnificent angel in the British Museum should probably be classed among these (frontispiece). It is the first half of a diptych of unusual size, and though the drapery is a little unmeaning in places, still it is good, and with the rich architecture and the thickly feathered wings, forms a splendid whole. There is nothing to compare with it in the sixth century for firmness of design ; yet the tendency to fullness in the face and the wealth of detail are signs of lateness, and it can hardly be dated with any certainty before the last years of the fifth century. The first half of the Greek inscription reads, "*Receive these things that are present and learning the cause—*". It is sad to see how soon this fine type was debased and moon faces and unstructural forms became the order of the day.

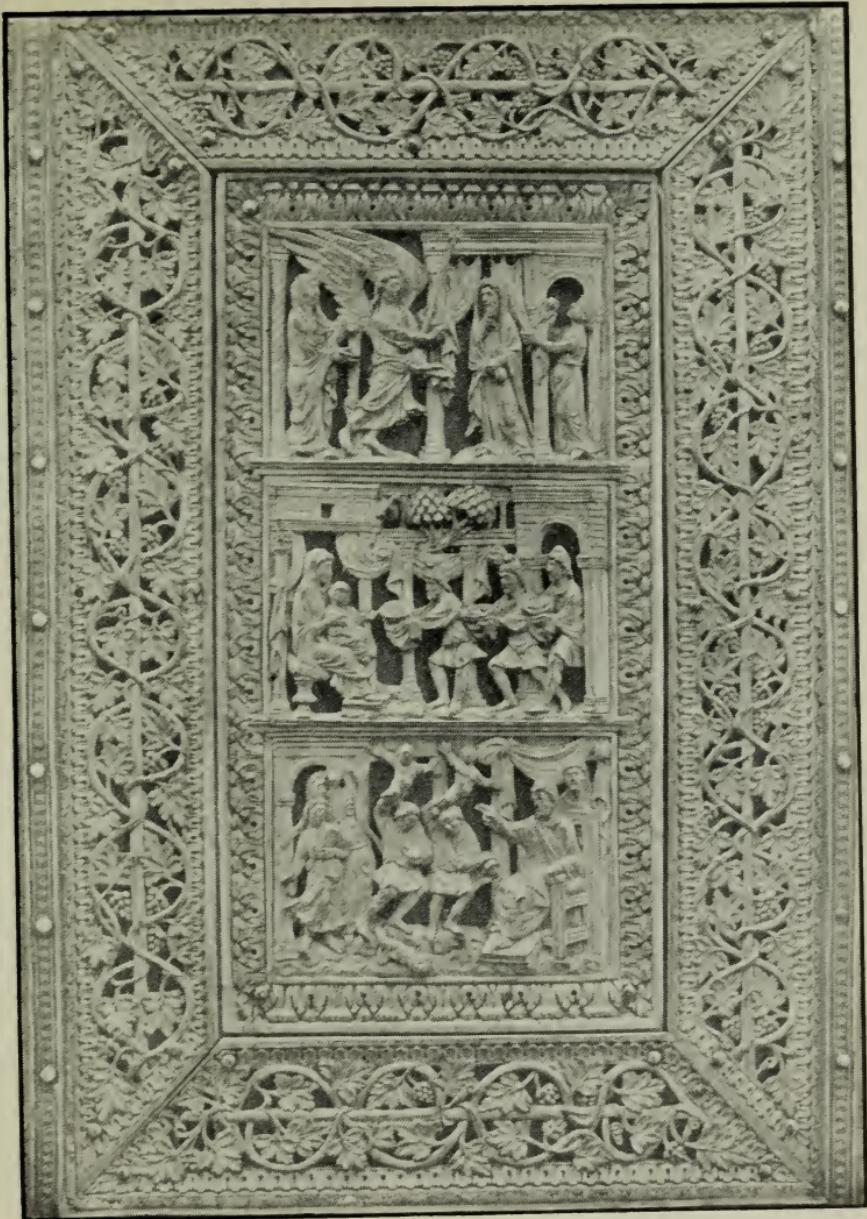
A beautiful book cover in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris (Fig. 11) came from the Cathedral of Metz, where it had been for centuries a model to the Carlovingian and German craftsmen.

## IVORY WORKERS

The pure design and justness of the movements, together with the generous folds of the drapery, all denote a close study of the fine work of antiquity; yet the complication of the design and the exaggerated fineness of the carving, which is pierced right through, show how far the work is from the simplicity of ancient art. The Italian craftsman had still individuality enough to resist the Byzantine influence in some things. The Virgin is draped like a Roman lady, and Herod has not yet donned the dress of a Byzantine functionary, as on the later ivories where court etiquette reigns supreme.

The artist of the Milan book covers had not so much strength, and has succumbed still more to Byzantine influence. These panels have been enriched at a later date by a jewelled lamb and cross. Much of the dress and detail is still Latin, but he draws his inspiration from the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus, and represents the Virgin receiving the Divine message, not in her own house but by the side of a stream, from which she is drawing water in a tall vase.

The three plaques of the casket of Werden (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum) belong to this series; there are the same rushing figures of the Magi, bearing strange gifts on flat dishes, and the Virgin also stands by the stream. A curious survivor of paganism is present at the Baptism of Our Lord, the allegorical figure of Jordan, not by any means a modest accessory, but a large muscular figure, proudly comparing his fine



A. GIRAUDON PHOTO.]

[BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, PARIS

II. COVER OF A BOOK OF THE GOSPELS, WITH  
THREE SCENES FROM THE NATIVITY  
Italo-Byzantine, sixth century

## IVORY WORKERS

shoulders with the rather meagre proportions of the sacred figures. Decidedly the Christian artists preferred the Spirit to the Flesh, and the era of elongated figures and champagne bottle shoulders was soon to commence.

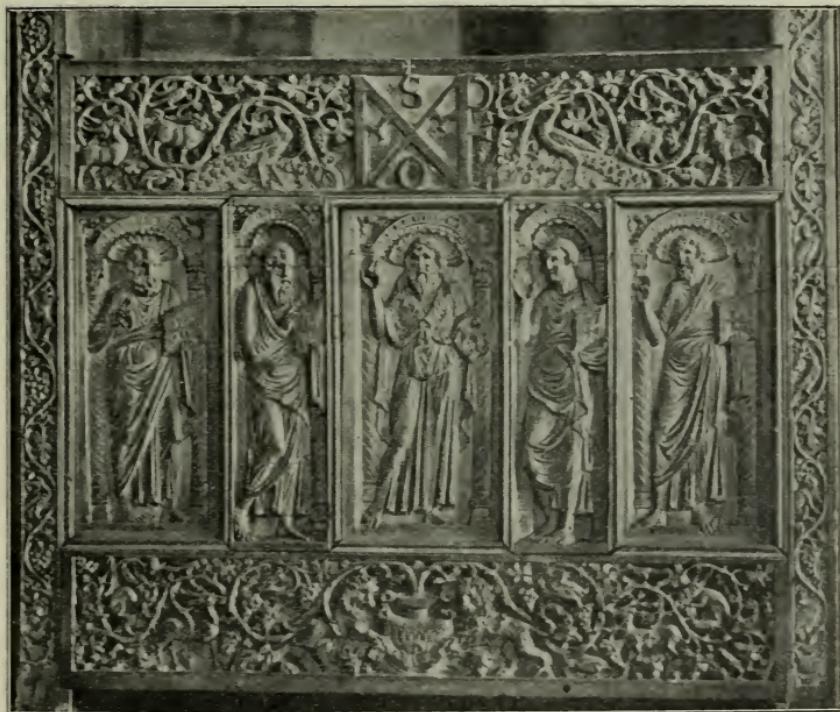
Milan Cathedral possesses another ivory carving too important to be passed over, which Molinier and Graeven attribute to this period in contradiction to Labarte, who declares it to be Italian Carlovingian of the ninth century, but the design is too closely connected with the series just under discussion for it to be possibly of later date than the sixth century. The two leaves of the diptych are crowded with active little figures, all intent on the business in hand. It should be noted that though the angel by the tomb is almost identical with that on the Trivulzio tablet, the guards are differently dressed, having the crested helmet and mailed tunic of antique Roman soldiers.

The separation of the two schools had become complete when the plaque in the Munich Museum was carved, probably well on in the sixth century. It is unmistakably Byzantine; in the lower half the Holy Women visit the Tomb, whilst above, there is a fine figure of Christ ascending to heaven; He rises with a powerful impetus, and the whole scene is far superior in vigour to the later representations. There is an interesting plaque in the Liverpool Museum, on which the Carlovingian craftsman has closely imitated the grouping of the Holy Women and the soldiers round the tomb.

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

The glory of the ivory craft is at Ravenna, the magnificent Throne of St. Maximian, bishop of that city from 546-553.

This *cathedra* or episcopal chair is entirely



L. RICCI PHOTO.]

[CATHEDRAL, RAVENNA

12. FRONT OF THE THRONE OF MAXIMIAN  
Italo-Byzantine, sixth century

covered with carved ivory, and has been treasured in the Cathedral for more than fourteen centuries. The throne was made in the sixth century, during that period of great artistic activity, when Justinian

## IVORY WORKERS

was engaged in beautifying Constantinople and the other great cities of his Empire. The new Church of St. Sophia was being decorated in the most gorgeous manner. The old chroniclers tell of gold and silver doors, and six doors of carved ivory; so the custom of overlaying large surfaces with ivory plaques was not an innovation. The bishop ordered his Throne and set it up at a time when Ravenna was still an important centre, and yearly adding to the number of its beautiful buildings.

S. Vitale, newly finished and decorated with the celebrated mosaic portraits of Justinian and Theodora, was consecrated by St. Maximian himself, who is pictured on the walls by the side of the Emperor. Yet, in spite of all this encouragement, art, and sculpture in particular, had already commenced that steady decline to the period of comparative stagnation which, as Professor Krambacher, the well-known Byzantine scholar, says, affected not only art but literature, and lasted nearly two hundred years, from about 650 to 850. The decline can be traced in the mosaics at Ravenna; those in S. Vitale are not so good as those in the tomb of Galla Placidia, while the decoration of the Baptistery is the most ancient and the best.

The Throne is most precious as an exception, showing really artistic work in a period when originality was rare. The height is one yard fourteen inches, the seat being flanked by two panels rising above it and forming the arms; the

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

front is entirely filled in by the large panel with five saints, the back is high and semi-circular, the top being arched. At the junction of the side panels, with the front and back, are upright posts, which form the feet, and rising slightly above the level of the panels are capped by flattened balls; these, and the strips of ivory which divide the back into little scenes, are carved with the most decorative vine scrolls, growing out of vases of classical shape, and peopled with a whole world of animals leaping in and out amid the leaves and bunches of grapes.

These borders show real progress and the adoption of new oriental ideas. The animated scroll work is often found on the Eastern textiles of this period, which must have formed objects of constant trade. The Koptic tombs on the Nile Delta<sup>1</sup> have yielded a numerous collection of contemporary textiles with beautifully woven patterns in much the same style. The vine from being a popular pagan decoration became closely connected with the Christian religion.

The carving of the wide borders on the back, if rather summary, attains the largeness of treatment as of sculpture in marble. The actual manual work on the Throne varies somewhat, and is probably the work of different artizans, Byzantine or Italian, but there can be little doubt that the whole was the work of one master mind.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Tapisseries Coptes*, par M. Gerspach, Paris, 1890.

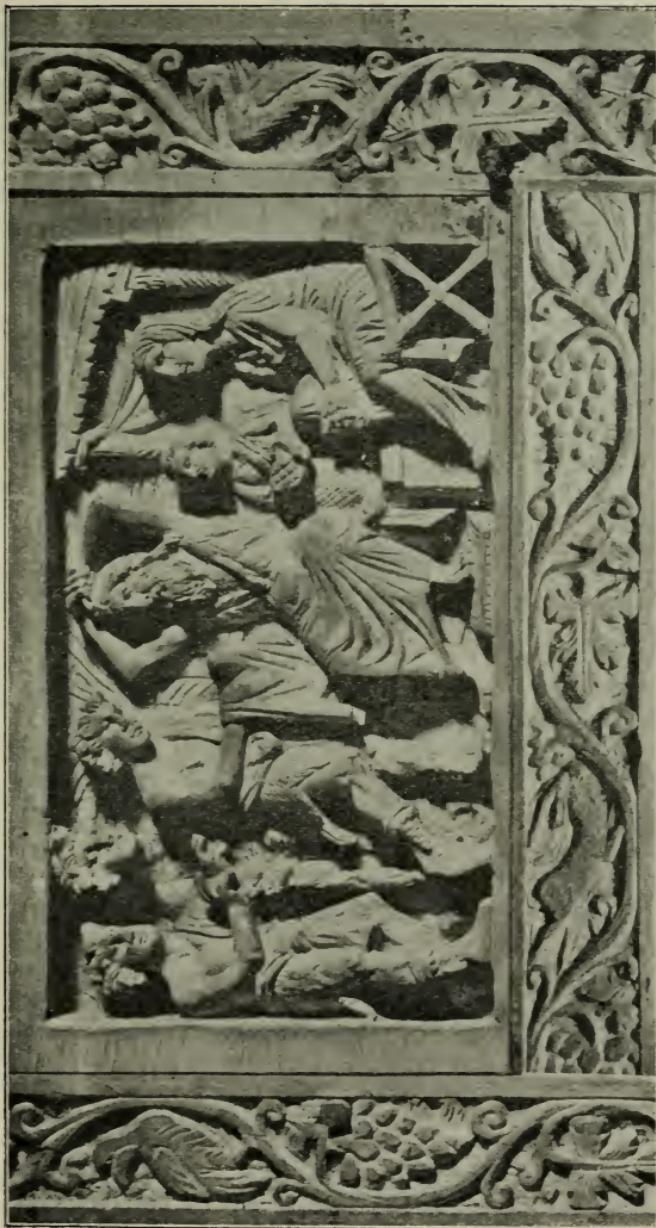
## IVORY WORKERS

The Five Saints on the front panel are of noble design and most carefully carved, but lacking in spontaneity. Each stands under the familiar round arch, and the scallop shell is arranged as a kind of halo behind each head.

The grand figure of John the Baptist stands in the middle of the Four Evangelists, among whom we are tempted to recognize St. Peter and St. Paul, but this resemblance is probably owing to the artist's poverty of types. Above, in the border, flanked by two peacocks of evident Syrian origin, is the monogram of the saint, which reads

*Maximianus episcopus.*

The plaques on the side panels deal with the life of Joseph, and those on the back have scenes from the life of Christ. The latter were twenty-four in number, but only seven remain, four inside and three out. Some of these are carved on each side, and all are bordered with a narrow and much debased Greek bead and lozenge moulding, which is an additional help in the identification of the straying pieces. One of these lost plaques is now in the collection of Count Stroganoff at Rome; it represents on one side "the Entry into Jerusalem," and on the other "the Nativity," with an additional incident in the withering of the hand of the incredulous attendant, Salome, which is recounted in the apocryphal gospels. The type of Joseph in this scene is just the low-browed, bullet-headed



L. RICCI PHOTO.]

13. PANEL FROM THE THRONE OF MAXIMIAN

Italo-Byzantine, sixth century

[CATHEDRAL, RAVENNA

## IVORY WORKERS

type of the Greek wrestler, and must have been borrowed from some ancient sculpture.

In the scene of the Annunciation the Virgin sits in a high-backed chair of basket-work, just like that on the Bargello pyx, with the Visit of the Magi. She is spinning, as described in the apocryphal gospels, and beside her stands a basket for her wool.

The plaque, with the Virgin riding on an ass, is not the flight into Egypt, but the journey to Bethlehem just before the Child was born, and the languid attitude of the Virgin as she leans in weakness on the shoulder of Joseph, is rendered with much feeling.

The Baptism of Christ is peculiarly interesting as it gives an insight into the early types of this subject. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove flies headlong downwards, and Christ is represented as a little naked child, and beside him, leaning on an urn is the personification of the River Jordan. Another remnant of pagan tradition is found in the winged and bearded genius of Sleep, who stands by Pharaoh's couch in the "Dream Scene." This figure also appears on a plaque in the Early Christian Room at the British Museum, which is decorated with scenes from the life of Christ, the strange bearded angel being present at the baptism. There is a very interesting ivory in the same room, a pyx representing the Martyrdom of St. Menas, which has another peculiarity in common with the carvings on the Throne, in the

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

elaborate and curiously embroidered blouse worn by the executioner, which is like that worn by Joseph in the house of Potiphar.

The scenes from Joseph's life are more deeply carved than the others, the figures are wonderfully characterized, the oriental faces of the Egyptians are framed in long plaits, like the Egyptian hair dressing on the monuments, which is even now to be seen on the Upper Nile. All these reliefs are a curious mixture of close observation of nature and servile imitations of classical types. The woman present at the sale of Joseph, holds her hand in her veil like many a stately figure in Roman art, but the meeting of Joseph with his old father is quite modern in its emotional force, the old man tremblingly totters forward into the arms of his stalwart young son, and one cannot help feeling irritated at the bystanders' conventional gestures as they gaze on such a touching scene. Jacob's wild distress (Fig. 13) is terribly realistic, and the contrasted stony despair of the bereaved Rachel is most dramatic. Rachel appears in other presentations of this subject, but the Bible narrative mentions her death some time before.

The *provenance* of this great monument is a very thorny question,<sup>1</sup> many writers notice the

<sup>1</sup> Venturi considers that the Throne was made for another Maximian, Archbishop of Constantinople 345, and being taken in the course of time to Venetia, is identical with that mentioned in the Chronicle of the Deacon John; who tells of an ivory throne sent in December, 1001, by the Doge Pietro Orseolo, to the Emperor Otto III., who was then residing in

## IVORY WORKERS

strongly marked oriental characteristics, and some infer that it was imported from Alexandria, which then had a flourishing school of artists and craftsmen. St. Maximian certainly visited Alexandria before he was made bishop, and he may afterwards have ordered the Throne to be made there, or brought over Alexandrian workmen. There is every reason to believe the story that the Emperor Heraklius brought over a carved ivory throne from Alexandria in the beginning of the next century. The difficulty of adopting this Alexandrian theory lies in the existence of an Italo-Byzantine school in Italy, which is proved by the number of pyxes and book covers, which seem to show nearly every step between the old Latin and the almost entirely Byzantine art of the Ravenna Throne. Of course many of these may have been influenced by the carvings on the Throne, but many are undoubtedly of earlier date. Any way, with the acceptance or rejection of this theory stands or falls the European origin of several other most important ivories: first and most important, the much-discussed Berlin diptych, representing on one leaf Christ as a middle-aged man, very similar in type to the John Baptist (Fig. 12), and on the others the Virgin, attended by wingless angels; Schmir-

Ravenna, and gave it to the Cathedral. There is no mention of an ivory throne in the Cathedral before this date. Cf. *Storia dell' arte italiana*, vol. i., p. 466. Ricci connects this throne with that of St. Mark in Grado. Cf. *L'arte italiana decorativa e industriale*, vol. vii., p. 104.

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

noff, by close examination of the border, which has been partially cut away, believes he has discovered the remains of a monogram similar to that on the front panel of the Throne. Also the plaque with the *Baptism of Christ*, in the British Museum, the Tongres diptych, the "Bateman" diptych, and one or two others which are closely related in style.

Reference was made to an ivory throne brought from Alexandria to Constantinople by Heraklius (610-641.) This throne was ultimately placed in the Cathedral at Grado, and the legend grew up that it was actually the episcopal throne of St. Mark, who was the first Bishop of Alexandria.

In the Castello at Milan there are a series of five plaques dealing with the subject of St. Mark's mission to Alexandria and Cyrene, as told in the Acts of St. Mark; there is every probability that they belonged to the throne of St. Mark in Grado, which appears to have been more or less perfect in the sixteenth century, but is reported by a later writer to be entirely stripped of its decoration. The Milan reliefs are of a very distinctive technique, the drapery being marked by rib-like folds, usually in couples, and the type of face is refined, though over elaborated. They are earlier than the time of Heraklius, and probably date from the sixth century.

Three scattered plaques are unmistakably connected with this series; *St. Peter dictating the Gospel of St. Mark*, with a winged figure behind,

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in the Victoria and Albert Museum; *The Raising of Lazarus* in the British Museum, and *The Annunciation*, in the Trivulzio Collection at Milan. The two last are more delicately carved, but the striking similarities of pose and drapery, and the same violent perspective of the architecture, make it almost certain that they are from the same *atelier*, if not by the hand of the same craftsman.

Two ivories of a totally different style seem to belong to the next century, but their dates are still a matter of doubt. One is a plaque in the Treasury of Trèves Cathedral, deeply undercut and full of little figures and details. Westwood says it represents the arrival of the Holy Coat to that very Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> The relic is in a casket held by two ecclesiastics, who sit in a gorgeous car drawn by a pair of horses. The procession is led by the Emperor Constantine and received at the church doors by his mother, Helena, who holds a cross in memorial of her journey to Jerusalem to fetch the True Cross. In the background is the Porta Nigra, and the nave of a basilica showing an apse.

Unfortunately, there is no proof of this attractive theory, though the building in the background does resemble the Porta Nigra (still existing at Trèves) and the basilica there has a very similar apse; but all Roman architecture imperfectly de-

<sup>1</sup> This coat is said to be the one "without seam," for which the soldiers cast lots, and which has an undoubted history from the time of the Empress Helena, in the fourth century.

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

picted looks much alike, every basilica has an apse, and it is not recorded how long the ivory has been in the Treasury at Trèves. Thus we must be reconciled to call it by an indeterminate name. It is certainly Byzantine, and most probably about the seventh century.

If possible there is still greater uncertainty about the second ivory, which is also of an architectural character and has lately been acquired by the Louvre authorities. It is without doubt Byzantine, and represents the conventional type of St. Paul, preaching to a distinguished and eager crowd. The relief of the ivory is very deep, and there is a certain boldness in the treatment of the mass of the crowd, also the city which towers over head, is of a very real structure and seems intended for some actual city.

Comparing the round arched buildings with the types of architecture on the sixth and seventh century mosaics, Molinier and Saglio attribute this ivory to the same period, but Schlumberger cannot believe it to be more ancient than the tenth century. The deep red colour is the remnant of the purple stain, which was probably still further enriched by gilding.

With few exceptions, it has been the common practice to colour ivories as well as statues, and though much at variance with our modern taste (which is founded on a mistaken appreciation of the tint of marble from which the colour has faded), it must have greatly enhanced the effect, especially

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in the smaller objects which enter almost into the province of *bijouterie*.

In the eighth century the iconoclastic<sup>1</sup> troubles commenced ; the movement was at first one of real reform, the charge of idolatry which had been brought against the Greek Christians by their Mahometan neighbours was not without foundation, but unfortunately the love of images was deeply rooted in the heart of the people, who transferred to these little pictures and images the same homage they had paid to their local protecting deities in pagan times.

A powerful party, always a minority, gained the ear of the Emperor Leo III., the Isaurian (717-741), a man of low birth, who had raised himself to his high station by sheer merit on the field of battle, and though he has been bitterly abused by his enemies, he appears to have been quite above the average of imperial character, which, it must be confessed, did not reach an overpoweringly high level.

This man, having subdued his country's enemies in the East, turned his active mind to the annihilation of the unhappy artists and all their works. At first his measures were moderate, the removing of pictures out of reach of the lips of the worshippers ; but superstition was so deeply rooted that an abortive revolt broke out, instigated by the monks, who, besides being the most strenuous advocates for images, were also the chief manufacturers.

<sup>1</sup> From εἰκὼν, a likeness, and κλάω, I break in pieces.

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

This rebellion was easily suppressed, but it provoked severer measures, an edict was promulgated that all images were to be destroyed, and the painted walls of the churches to be covered with plaster. All opposition was punished by a rapid crescendo of penalties, by imprisonment, mutilation and excommunication. More revolts followed, Leo became still more angry, and the next thing we read of is the destruction by fire of the great Library of Constantinople, guards and all, by order of the Emperor. The guards were not a matter of importance, as a violent death one way or other was of small moment in those most unpleasant times; but the manuscripts were an irreparable loss, almost as terrible as the burning of the Alexandrian Library by the Mahometans, only a hundred years before, and for the same unreasonable reason.

These struggles continued, with less or more violence, for nearly 150 years; the choleric Leo was succeeded by his still more violent son, Constantine V. who, according to the opposite party (which contained all the chroniclers), was closely related to the Evil One, but he certainly had great energy, and was probably not so black as he was painted. He continued the work of his father with great vigour, and, it must be added, considerable cruelty.

Sometimes there was comparative calm, as when the Empress Irene seized the reins of government from her unhappy son, Constantine VI., in 797,

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and issued an edict of tolerance. She was a wonderful woman, and lived in imperial state for many years, against all law, human and divine; for she was many bad things, besides being a woman, and as such, debarred from government. Among her schemes was an alliance with Charlemagne, to whom she offered her hand; the offer was not accepted, and soon after she was exiled to Lesbos by another usurper, who, being a violent iconoclast, immediately restored all the oppressive laws. With delightful readiness the ecclesiastical General Councils promulgated decrees for, or against, the cult of images, according to the taste of the ruling power.

Theophilus, the last of the iconoclastic emperors, was a great builder of churches and palaces, and none of the iconoclasts went to the length of forbidding the introduction of the human form, and reducing decoration to geometrical motives and scroll work, as is the case of Arabian art.

Theophilus was succeeded by his widow, the Empress Theodora, who governing in the name of her infant son Michael III., promptly reversed all the edicts of her husband and his predecessors, and endeared herself to the Greeks, by the restoration of their beloved images, and the final defeat of the iconoclastic party, which was accomplished about 842.

Though there was a sensible difference after this movement, still it is easy to exaggerate its influence on Byzantine art. The edicts of the Emperor were not always carried out to the letter,

## LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

except, perhaps, in the capital city, and even there the smaller objects were secreted, and women, always conservative, clung to their *lares* and *penates*, keeping up the old observances as much as possible. Many an obstinate monk took pride and pleasure in setting the law at defiance, carving little diptychs with the decoration on the inner



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

### 14. OLIPHANT

Oriental-Byzantine, ninth and tenth centuries

side, so that they could be folded together and slipped away in safety.

The civil art went on uninterruptedly, and in such a luxurious city the objects of secular use must have been very rich and varied. A large series of caskets have come down to us, preserved in the treasuries of churches as shrines for the relics of saints, also large oliphants, or complete tusks,

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hollowed out and thickly covered with linked patterns of strongly oriental style; these were first imported from the East and afterwards imitated more or less exactly by Byzantine craftsmen. In early ritual they were used as horns to announce the commencement and the end of the Mass, and also to contain reliques, and it was the latter use which brought them in such numbers to the West. The miniaturists, also, continued their art, copying and illustrating texts of Homer and Virgil and other classical writers.

The iconoclastic movement, though lasting a century and a quarter, had no permanent effect in checking the natural development of art. In fact, the greater impetus given to the civil art had rather the effect of purifying the Byzantine style by constant reference to the antique, and prepared the way for the Renaissance of the tenth century. Byzantine art is still so little known that it is probable that many ivories now classed in the tenth may belong to the preceding century.

Molinier attributes even the Vienna and Bargello diptych (Fig. 5) to the mid iconoclastic period, to that lull in the storm during the reign of the Empress Irene (end of eighth century), whose portrait he considers it to be. This ivory, though more probably of the sixth century, has some slight likeness in the wide face and full neck to the two busts of Christ and the symbolic angel of St. Matthew in the Library, Ravenna (the eagle of St. John is in the Victoria and Albert Museum).

## BYZANTINE CASKETS

These must be classed with another ivory of this period in the Louvre, a figure of Christ standing under a richly decorated arch, but the low forehead and staring eyes, with the pompous attitude, in imitation of the beautiful British Museum angel, make it positively ridiculous.

Another plaque in the Berlin Museum, the only dated ivory of the ninth century, represents an emperor being crowned by the Virgin, and bears the name of a "Basileus Leo." The early emperors of this name are too ancient, and the last three were rabid iconoclasts, so that brings it to the Emperor Leo VI., crowned in 886. Unfortunately this work, which should be most useful for comparison, is of rough technique, and evidently a provincial production, for no craftsman of the great metropolis could have produced such uncultivated work, even on the morrow of the iconoclastic crisis.

### II. BYZANTINE CASKETS.

We owe to the series of secular caskets most of our knowledge of this transitional period. They do not appear to have been articles of great luxury and were usually made of bone and sometimes indifferent carved. The fashion continued for several hundred years, and side by side with these secular caskets we have others decorated with scenes from Old Testament history, which, though very few in number at first, become more frequent as time goes on. The religious caskets have

## IVORY WORKERS

many details in common with the secular, but draw their inspiration from a different source.

There is great similarity in the design of the secular caskets, the box itself being made of wood and covered with ivory plaques. The lids are either in the shape of a truncated pyramid, and hinged, or flat and sliding into grooves. The decoration consists of an elaborate border surrounding either long scenic plaques, as in the *Veroli* casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 15), or more often little squares containing a single figure (*Bargello*, etc.). The borders show strong oriental influence, and invariably consist of ringed rosettes connected by a pointed leaf; these rosettes sometimes alternate with coin-like medallions, and there are occasionally additional bands of varying pattern, as on the *Volterra* casket (late Spitzer Collection) at the Musée de Cluny.

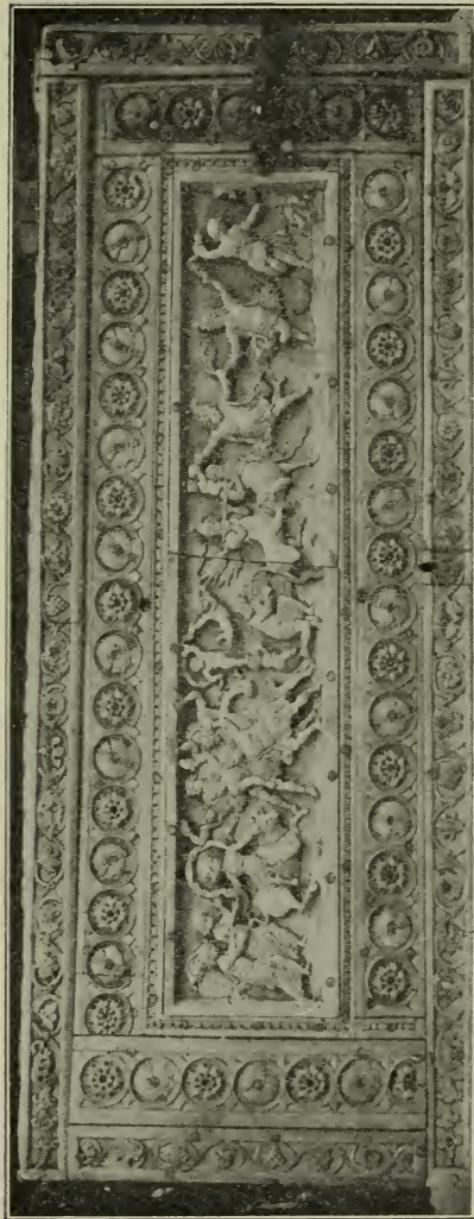
The subjects are a proof of the still lingering power of classical antiquity, and of the infiltration of oriental designs. They are either taken from ancient myths (often very imperfectly understood by the adaptor), or from scenes in the hippodrome or circus (*Volterra*); perhaps also from the statues, part of the Grecian loot that Constantine had brought from Rome to decorate his new city.

Most of these caskets are composed in the gayest frame of mind; on the beautiful ivory *Veroli* casket the little loves, on the light fantastic toe, dance to the harping of poor, melancholy, old

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

15. THE VEROLI CASKET

Byzantine, ninth and tenth centuries



## IVORY WORKERS

Polyphemus, who is compelled to cease his solitary lament and play hornpipes and jigs for the benefit of wild Bacchantes, who whirl round and round till their drapery is tossed out like foam. It is amusing to see these same ladies on the casket at Cividale, no longer carved with delicate finish, but angular and rough, the drapery flying out like wire, and the development of the muscles rivalling that of a prima ballerina.

The maker of the *Pirano* casket in the Vienna Museum imitated the *Veroli* in many things, as the putti and the panther, and the group of Mars caressing Venus under the chin, in the good old-fashioned Brescia diptych way, also the peculiar treatment of the hair in tiny knobby ringlets, which is found again on the Bologna casket, and on two most interesting plaques in the British Museum. One plaque represents *Christ freeing the Souls in Hades*, and the other *The Nativity*. On the first there is a group of little child-souls with polished round muscles and knobby hair, also the hair of the angels in both the scenes is of the same character, the rest of the technique has little to distinguish it from the so-called X-XI century type; but the conception of the subject is not the ordinary stereotyped one of later years, and those few peculiarities of style have such a marked connection with the *Veroli* casket, that Graeven considers it likely that they both came from the same *atelier*, and may, perhaps, be dated about the middle of the ninth century.

## BYZANTINE CASKETS

Before pointing out the various similarities between these secular caskets, and those with religious subjects, it would be well to inquire into the ancestry of the separate styles.

The classical designs on the secular caskets are more completely conventionalized than would be the result of direct imitation of antique originals by later craftsmen; and the coin-like borders give a clue to finding out what were their actual models. They must have been inspired by the *repoussé* designs on gold and silver plate, it being a very common practice, in all ages, to insert coins round the edges of precious vessels. The peculiar tapering ankles and delicate wrists are another proof of some other technique intervening between the marble sculpture and the ivories. The tendency of marble to crack if exposed to too great a weight, led to a sturdiness in all detached forms, and not even in the bronze statues are such exaggeratedly slender extremities to be found.

Ancient records often tell of large masses of plate being presented to churches in the West. A single gift to St. Germain at Auxerre in the seventh century, consisted of one hundred silver vessels, including two great dishes decorated with reliefs from the *Æneid*, and a third with the "Rape of Europa," and having Greek inscriptions. If there was such a mass of plate in the West, the richness of Constantinople in gold and silver vessels must have been simply fabulous. The descriptions of the Byzantine chroniclers, and the figures given

## IVORY WORKERS

of the Venetian share in the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, are astounding.

The silver casket at Anagni forms a connecting link ; it is the same shape and style as the ivory caskets, and the little silver reliefs are mounted in the same manner with border strips.

The caskets with religious subjects are derived from the miniatures in ancient and contemporary manuscripts, as has been abundantly proved by the complete correspondence of existing plaques and miniatures. The Victoria and Albert Museum possesses an excellent example in the strip of ivory, with Joshua receiving envoys from the people of Gibeon, which is taken almost line for line from two miniatures in the famous Joshua Roll in the Vatican Library ; except that in the translation of the painting into sculpture, certain details had to be simplified, and the serried ranks of Joshua's soldiers were reduced to a faithful copy of the forward group.

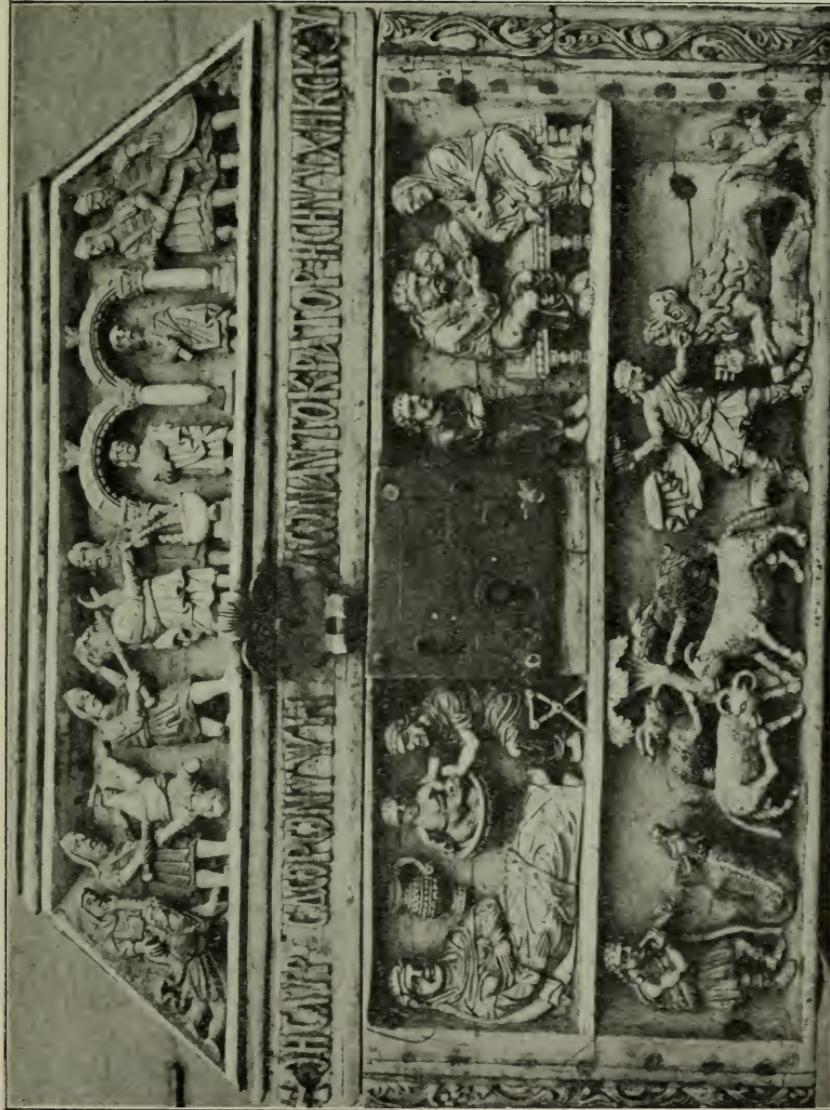
A tiny plaque in the Grüne Gewölbe at Dresden is another instance of this connection with the manuscripts. It is one of two surviving portions of a casket decorated with the life of Joseph, and is directly inspired by the wonderful Genesis codex at Vienna. This codex is especially interesting as showing the artist's delight in scenes of domestic affection ; the picture, which coincides with the ivory carving, illustrates the departure of Joseph to get news of his brethren. His father with a stately gesture bids him go, and as he goes he turns to

[MUSEO KIRCHERIANO, ROME

16. FRONT OF A CASKET. SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

Byzantine, ninth century

DR. H. GRAEVEN PHOTO.]



G

## IVORY WORKERS

kiss his little brother Benjamin, who follows him a little way. The sculptor has taken the moment of the kiss, and the gentleness of the action is like the little domestic scene on the casket in the Museo Kircheriano at Rome (Fig. 16).

The carvings on this casket give a graphic account of the early life and adventures of David, and are most probably derived from some lost manuscript of the Book of Samuel. The active little figures are exceedingly droll, and it is difficult not to think that a little of the gay secular spirit had crept into these more sober scenes. The lamb which sits up and begs while David pipes is particularly engaging. The front side of the sloping lid is given up to most tragic scenes, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, and the *Murder of Zachariah, the High Priest*, “killed between the temple and the altar.” The inscription tells us that the casket was intended as a marriage gift to a Basileus and Basilissa from another wedded pair, the portraits all being on the top.

The various details which the two series of caskets have in common, prove they belong to the same period. On the *Veroli* casket (Fig. 15), the group of men stoning the bull which bears away Europa corresponds with a miniature in the Joshua Roll, which depicts the stoning of the captive people of Achan. The rosette border is also found on a twelfth century casket with half-length figures of saints in the Bargello. On some of these caskets the plaques are decorated with designs taken bodily

## BYZANTINE CASKETS

from Oriental textiles and carvings; the smaller *Volterra* casket in the Musée de Cluny is a case in point, and it has the additional charm of an open-work border of maple leaves on a gilt background.

Some writers call these caskets Italo-Byzantine because a large number have been found in the treasuries of Italian cathedrals, but their ancestry is thoroughly Byzantine. It is not impossible that some few examples were made in the West, as several stone reliefs have been found in Venetia, clearly dating from the first decade of the eleventh century, and ornamented with the same classical subjects, confused in the same way with foreign elements, and surrounded by the customary rosette border, and which are most probably copies of these Byzantine fancy goods.

The Throne of St. Peter in the apse of his church in Rome, is made up in the same way with little plaques representing the *Labours of Hercules* and other purely pagan subjects. The ivory carvings belong to two periods, one, admittedly, of the ninth century when the Throne was restored, and the others are traditionally supposed to date from the lifetime of the apostle. It was inclosed 200 years ago in a hideous casing, and no close examination is permitted. If this chair is really of great antiquity, even if not so early as the first century, it would be a great support to Venturi's assumption that all these secular caskets belong really to classical antiquity, and are of late Roman origin. There is a beautiful casket in the

## IVORY WORKERS

Cathedral of Troyes, of the tenth or eleventh century, which was sent back by Garnier de Traisnel, Bishop of Troyes, and Almoner to the Crusaders. Garnier died in the East, but sent home his share of the spoil from Constantinople. It is stained a rich purple and evidently belonged to the Basileus, who is depicted on horseback.

### III. THE BYZANTINE RENAISSANCE.

The Golden Age of Byzantine Art commences about the beginning of the tenth century, and, roughly speaking, coincides with the rule of the great Macedonian dynasty, a period when the warrior emperors, usurpers or otherwise, kept the invading barbarians at bay.

The Byzantine chroniclers expatiate at great length on the unparalleled luxury of the Court and how the "Sacred Palace" was filled with art treasures; and they also tell us that Constantine VII., Porphyrogenitus (911-959), was an enthusiastic amateur, and even employed his "sacred" fingers in carving and painting beautiful objects; it was about the only thing he did do, for the government was entirely taken out of his hands by a series of usurpers who were nominally his colleagues.

Ivory carving was only one small portion of this great stream of decorative work, but an important part, as there was practically no sculpture in stone. In the new basilica at Constantinople were some animals carved on the marble fountains, and a few

## BYZANTINE RENAISSANCE

inferior bas-reliefs have been found in the Crimea and Mount Athos, but the technique is merely an enlargement of the tiny reliefs, with a complete loss of that delicacy and loving finish which is the greatest charm of the ivory craft.

The number of examples of carved ivory during the tenth and eleventh centuries is so great that it is most difficult to make a selection. The Reliquary of the True Cross in the Franciscan Church at Cortona is valuable for comparison with other carvings of the tenth century, for it is dated by an inscription mentioning the Basileus Nicephorus, Conqueror of the Barbarians, who can be no other than Nicephorus Phocas (963-969). The reliquary is divided in the usual manner into four compartments by the arms of the great central crucifix, and owing to the shallowness of the space the figures are not so disproportionately tall as was mostly the case. In the research for dignity and reverence the figures became less and less earthly, the shoulders sloping away to nothing, and a growing tendency crept in to exaggerate the height out of all proportion; also the calm expression on the delicate oval faces grew more and more solemn, till on some of the later ivories it is positively lugubrious. Yet the quiet grace and exquisite dignity of a figure like that of the Virgin on the Harbaville Triptych (Fig. 17), is hardly to be found in the finest Italian art. The pose of this figure and that of John the Forerunner, Πρόδρομος, are almost identical with those on the Cortona Reliquary; the Virgin's ges-

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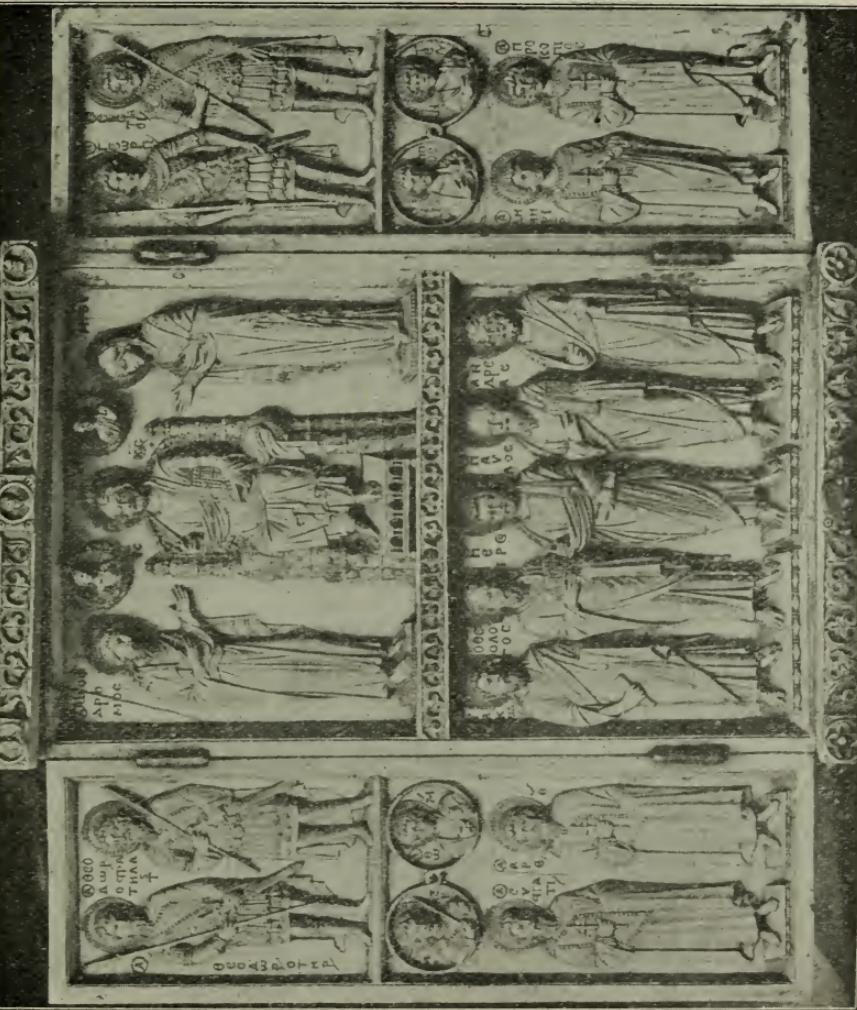
ture of adoration is simple and spontaneous, and it is only when it is repeated by St. John that the balance of the pattern becomes too exact and pains the eye. The figure of Christ, grandly posed on the highbacked throne, is the type of nearly every other representation of the Saviour throughout the whole period (cf. Fig. 19) and traces back directly to the Roman official diptychs. The drapery is elegant and well considered, though the folds have a hard flatness in spite of the soft finish of the technique. The features inherit much from the antique, the well-cut brow and deeply set eyes, but the noses have increased in length and have that slight curve at the tip which is so characteristic, and becomes so pronounced, in later Byzantine Art. The fine heads, framed in their rugged mane of hair, are very picturesque, but there is such a strong family likeness among them, that it is quite refreshing to meet a bald forehead like that of St. Paul or St. John Theologus, here represented as an aged man and not as the beardless stripling of Western art. Above all, it is the hands and the well-proportioned muscular feet, which show the power of the real artist escaping from the conventionality of his subject. On the back of the panel he has freed himself entirely from the spell of classical antiquity and drunk deeply of new oriental ideas, creating a most decorative design, illustrating the "Triumph of the Cross," which rises, ornamented with roses, above the flowering

[LOUVRE, PARIS

17. TRIPTYCH D'HARBAVILLE

Byzantine, tenth century

A. GIRAUDON PHOTO.]



## IVORY WORKERS

earth, stretching up to the skies, which are thickly covered with stars, and bear the Greek inscription *Jesus Christ Victorious*. Two tall cypresses, tightly bound by the symbolical vine and by ivy, bow before it, whilst from the ground spring small trees and reeds, among which wild animals run in and out.

The trees may be contrasted with the fruitful olives on the Bargello plaque of the Ascension (Fig. 18). The composition of this scene is grand in character, in spite of its small size, and there is great freedom of movement in the lower group, each pose being cleverly characterized; the grouping is scarcely freer in the Italian conception of this subject, and the upraised hand of the apostle on the Virgin's left is to be seen, centuries later, in the famous "Assumption of the Virgin" by Titian. There are many other plaques with scenic pictures. The elaborate carving of the *Death of the Virgin* is still fixed to the Bamberg Missal, which belonged to Cunigunda, wife of the Emperor Henry II. (1002-1028). The scene is crowded, and takes place under a richly pierced canopy. Christ holds the Infant Soul of the Virgin, whilst two angels with veiled hands fly down to receive it.

Perhaps the most beautiful of all these pictorial sculptures is a diptych now unfortunately divided. Each leaf has two scenes, the first, representing the *Holy Women kneeling before the risen Christ* and the *Resurrection*, is at Dresden, while the other, with the *Crucifixion* and the *Deposition*, is in the



DR. H. GRAEVEN PHOTO.]

[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

18. ASCENSION  
Byzantine, eleventh century

## IVORY WORKERS

Provincial Museum at Hanover. The various scenes are treated with much freedom, and the proportions are excellent. It is enough to glance at the appalling length of the two Maries in a twelfth century plaque with the *Resurrection* (Bargello) to realize how much we have to be thankful for in the earlier periods.

There are a large number of triptychs<sup>1</sup> all more or less of the Harbaville school. A fine one at the Louvre of *Christ* and *St. Theodore* has lost the second wing, and of another still finer one, only the splendidly carved wings remain, widely separated now, one being in Vienna and the other in the Doge's Palace at Venice. Several of these little shrines inclose a group of the *Virgin and Child*, the two most beautiful being in the Episcopal Museums of Utrecht and Liège. Count Strogonoff in his interesting collection at Rome has a particularly fine seated *Virgin and Child*. The whole pose is most pleasing and the Infant Christ on her knee has a far more childish face than usual, the Holy Child being more often like a little man, raising his hand to bless with exaggerated dignity. But the ineradicable love of ostentation and luxury leads the artist to diminish the importance of a really dignified figure by adding a mass of gigantic and over-decorated accessories, and the legs of the throne are wrought with more exactitude than he bestows on the robe of the central figure.

<sup>1</sup> Full list given by Molinier, *Les Arts appliqués*, vol. i.



G. ROSSI PHOTO.]

[TRIVULZIO COLLECTION, MILAN

19. CHRIST ENTHRONED

Byzantine, eleventh century

## IVORY WORKERS

There are many other interesting ivories in this fine collection, which even contains one of the lost plaques from the Throne of Maximian. Among them is a noble figure of *Christ Teaching* which might well correspond to the *John Baptist* at Liverpool, one of the gems of the Mayer Collection. John bears a roll with the text commencing, "Behold the Lamb of God," which would refer to the Christ on the opposite leaf of a diptych. The Liverpool Museum also possesses a fine triptych, with Christ on the Cross, the Virgin and St. John. This is a type which seized the imagination of the German people, who constantly repeated it, losing, perhaps, in technique, but gaining in vigour and expression, as will be seen on referring to Fig. 24.

The plaque in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris (Fig. 20), is a fitting end to an account of the ivories of the Byzantine Renaissance. It represents the *Emperor Romanus IV. and the Empress Eudoxia being crowned by Christ*. It is doubly interesting, as through its certain date (the Emperor's reign only lasting four years 1067-1071), we can compare it with earlier work, as the Cortona Reliquary or the Harbaville triptych (Fig. 17), and see that after more than a hundred years the art had not changed for better or worse. This plaque is also interesting from its artistic value, which is very high, the figure of Christ being one of the finest in the whole range of Byzantine ivory carving. We can see that the artist was perfectly capable of rendering drapery



A. GIRAUDON PHOTO.]

[CABINET DES MÉDAILLES, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, PARIS

20. ROMANUS IV. AND EUDOXIA CROWNED BY CHRIST  
Byzantine, eleventh century

## IVORY WORKERS

in a soft and pliant manner, yet the tyranny of the court etiquette compelled him to envelop the Basileus and Basilissa in the stiffest of sheaths, covered with a regular mosaic of jewels ; and to pay honour to the Saviour he was obliged to place under His feet that triple platform of hideous device.

“The composition of the figures is not the invention of the painters, but the law of tradition of the Catholic Church.” These are the words of a decree of the Nicene Council in the eighth century, and it is not surprising that these compositions, settled on theological grounds were inclined to be unvarying and hieratic, the wonder is that they have so many artistic qualities. Another bond for the unfortunate artist was a certain work called “A Guide to Painting,” in which minute regulations are laid down for every detail of form and colouring. It does not appear to have been in force till after this period of renaissance, but a strict adherence to these formulæ is, without doubt, the reason why it is practically impossible to tell a nineteenth from a twelfth century mosaic by reference alone to style.

This great stream of art and culture went on uninterruptedly, no matter what were the palace intrigues or the sudden changes of government. One winter night a great cry is raised, the Emperor, the brave general whose glorious campaigns had enabled the city to increase its wealth and commerce a thousandfold, had been slain, foully murdered by order of his wife and his ancient

## BYZANTINE RENAISSANCE

friend. Yet there is no revolt among the people ; what is it to them ? A few dangerous partizans are killed, and later a few of the hired murderers, and the wife in question, are offered up to the Church in expiation of the usurper's crime. In the evening Nicephorus Phocas is Emperor, and by the next morning John Zimisces is crowned and reigning in his stead. Both the emperors were good generals, and could keep the barbarians at bay, and, for the matter of that, they were both flagrant usurpers, the rightful sovereigns, Basil and Constantine, being kept half prisoners in the palace, while their so-called colleagues ruled the country ; and if freedom from invasion, wealth, and munificent patronage of the arts are signs of good government, then these usurpers were pattern rulers. This was by no means the case with Basil II., who, at the mature age of sixty flung off the tutelage of his colleagues and plunged into a wild career of conquest, earning for himself not only the title of "Destroyer of the Bulgarians," but the hearty hatred of his subjects at home and in the provinces.

With Basil we must leave the Byzantine Empire, which had reached its apogee of political power and art production. It was centuries before the internal decay made itself felt, but the great edifice never recovered the shock of the invasion and sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, and falling bit by bit before the attacks of the Mahometans, finally fell an easy prey to the Seljuk Turks in 1453.

## CHAPTER III

### LOMBARDIC, ANGLO-SAXON, CARLOVINGIAN AND GERMAN IVORIES

#### I. LOMBARD IVORY CARVINGS

WE have seen how Constantinople, or the “New Rome,” became the centre of the new Christian World as Alexandria had been of the Hellenistic; and for many centuries the riches and splendour of this most luxurious city shone out on the barbarian nations, as a lodestar for their imagination and a pattern for all civilization and culture. Byzantine, being an intrusive art in these countries, did not entirely crush out native effort, but modified the design and vastly improved the technique. Each imitator introduced more of himself and got further from the Greek original, so there arose a composite style, strongly influenced by the Byzantines, yet bearing in it the seeds of a national art.

Leaving aside the large number of Syro-Byzantine and other Eastern ivories, we must pass on to Italy, where the remains of the old Latin art still lingered, though terribly debased and mingled with that of the barbarian Lungobards. By the seventh century sculpture was reduced to

## LOMBARD IVORY CARVINGS

a deplorable state, and as Cattaneo says,<sup>1</sup> it is most unlikely that the Ravenna carved sarcophagi were really made at this period ; they more probably belonged to ancient burials, with the new name carved on the lid.

Even in ivory carving, which is always behind the age, we find an almost ludicrous barbarity. An ivory tablet of the eighth century in the Bologna Museum is a fair example of this mixed style ; it has three tiers of scenes from the *Nativity*, and shows strong Byzantine influence, yet there is something in the treatment of the drapery, barbaric as it is, which seems to lead on to the later Italian style of the eleventh century, which definitely connects with the earliest Gothic art in France.<sup>2</sup> An example of this may be seen in a plaque in the Bargello, representing Christ in glory surrounded by angels.

By far the most celebrated example of this long period is the diptych of Rambona in the Vatican, which in spite of the miserable relief and the rudeness of the technique, plainly shows the two influences, Lombardic and Byzantine. At the foot of the cross is a large representation of Romulus and Remus with the Roman wolf. At the top the familiar pair of flying angels, much curtailed, bear a medallion containing a bust of Christ raising His hand to bless in the Greek manner. On the

<sup>1</sup> *L'Archittetura in Italia, VI.-XI. cent.* Venice, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> See Marcel Reymond, *La Sculpture Toscane*. Florence, 1897.

## IVORY WORKERS

second leaf the Virgin is enthroned between two cherubim, the lower portion being ornamented with fragmentary scroll-work of a northern type, surrounding figures of the saints of more or less Byzantine design. An important inscription runs between stating that the diptych was carved for a certain Ageltruda, who was most probably the wife of Guy, Duke of Camerino and Spoleto, King of Italy, and Emperor in 891.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum there are two noteworthy examples of Lombard Art; a strange tall-figured group of *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, with architecture of a strongly marked Lombard type, and a plaque with a representation of *Joseph's Dream*. Both of these are carved in a large style with open surfaces, but show a very rudimentary notion of drapery. The latter is especially interesting as the design is almost exactly the same as in the elaborate series of plaques from the *Paliotto* or shrine in the Cathedral at Salerno (eleventh to twelfth century). The subjects of these carvings are taken from the life of Christ and from the Old Testament, and show an unusually full series of scenes from Genesis, with most picturesque representations of the creation. The fluency of the design and technique of these plaques is a strange and sudden oasis in a desert of barbarism. If they were made at Salerno, as seems likely, the technique of some school in the old Greek city may have lingered on, receiving new life from the encouragement of the Normans,

## ANGLO-SAXON IVORY CARVINGS

who certainly showed themselves ardent patrons of the arts in Sicily.

There had been little encouragement of the arts elsewhere in Italy. Several objects of goldsmith's work and ivory in the Basilica at Monza are said to have belonged to Theodolinda, the Lombard queen, in addition to the famous ivory diptych sent to her by Gregory the Great, which was of an earlier date. Two hundred years later Popes Adrian and Leo III., seconded Charlemagne in his efforts to restore learning and culture; and finally Didier, the great abbot of Monte Cassino in 1018, and afterwards Pope, was also a great admirer and benefactor of the arts.

It is not surprising that poor Italy made so little progress, for all this time she was ravaged, first by the Saracens, who invaded the mainland from Sicily, which they had conquered from the Greeks, and then by the Normans, who in the eleventh century, consolidated their power in South Italy, and afterwards in Sicily, under Robert Guiscard.

## II. ANGLO-SAXON IVORY CARVINGS.

The earliest carvings in the Northern countries still belonged to the type of geometric and interlaced patterns roughly cut in walrus or whalebone. The panels from the sarcophagus of St. Caletricus, Bishop of Chartres in the sixth century, is an example of this rough kind of decoration, which is also found on objects from the Germanic tombs.

## IVORY WORKERS

The Anglo-Saxons were far more advanced, owing to the training of the Keltic schools. In the British Museum there is a whalebone casket, probably made in Northumbria in the eighth century. It is ornamented with scenes from the Sagas, the Holy Scriptures and from Roman legends; this range of subjects gives a clue to the explanation of the style, which is Norse, influenced by Byzantine religious art, but the latter has been so transformed by the unskilful craftsman that it is hardly recognizable. The whole casket is bordered by a Runic inscription relating the capture of the whale which supplied the bone; it has been translated thus :

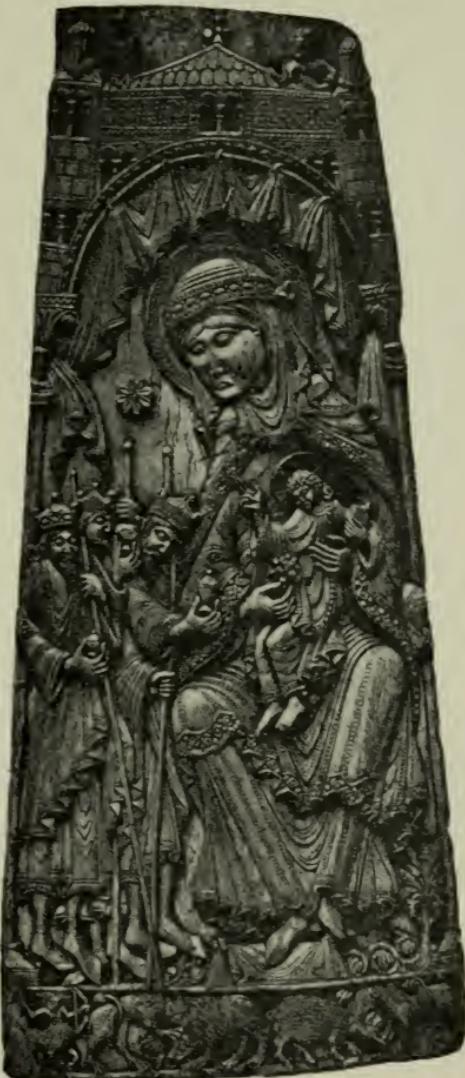
“The whale’s bones from the fishes’ flood,  
I lifted on Fergen’s Hill :  
He was dashed to death in his gambols  
As a-ground he swam in the shallows.”

The name Fergen occurs on a charter of the eleventh century, and has been identified with Ferry Hill in the county of Durham. The front panel is divided into two, and represents the daughter of Herodias receiving John Baptist’s head, the headless body lying on the ground, and the Wise Men offering gifts, the word “Magi” being written in runes above them. All that remains of the Byzantine model of the Virgin and Child are two nimbed heads, one below the other, a lesser and a greater disk sheltered by a typical Byzantine *ciborium* or four-pillared canopy. One end has a picture of Romulus and Remus and their wolf, and the rest is

## ANGLO-SAXON IVORY CARVINGS

decorated with scenes from the Sagas. The background of these reliefs is so crowded by small objects and fragments of scroll-work that the scenes are difficult to make out; but it is extremely interesting as a sample of English art in the time of the Heptarchy.

*The Adoration of the Magi* in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 21), has been also attributed to this period, but Westwood's opinion that it is of the eleventh century is more probably correct, the workmanship being most delicate and finished, and the design closely connected with the pictures in the tenth century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which have the same crinkled



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, LONDON]

21. ADORATION OF THE MAGI  
Anglo-Saxon, eleventh century

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edges to the drapery, large heads and protruding eyes, with a sharply accentuated pupil. In the relief the modelling of the face, with the hollow between the wide cheekbones and the lips gives the face quite a Hibernian appearance which is visible in several other ivories of this class, notably in a most pathetic *Deposition* in the same museum.

The richly embroidered dress and tiny feet and hands show Byzantine influence, but the architecture, with the twin arch windows is thoroughly Saxon. The mysterious man on the roof is a curious genre addition, and the owl, most likely typifies the night. The hunting scenes clearly show the two art waves, the lions are unintelligently copied from the conventional Byzantine animal, but very considerable first-hand information is shown in the drawing of the boars and bears, with which the craftsman probably had some personal acquaintance.

The *Deposition* referred to above is of the eleventh century, and has a curious prototype in the Arundel Psalter (No. 60, British Museum), with the same attenuated anatomy and finely plaited drapery. The design is instinct with the spirit of these Anglo-Saxons and their Keltic teachers, as is seen in the mournful expression of the faces, and the utter deadness of Christ's body as He falls forward from the cross, hanging His threadlike arms. The whole feeling is of suffering and sadness, very different from the cheerful scenes on the earlier, and the calm, unmoved solemnity of

## ANGLO-SAXON IVORY CARVINGS

the later Byzantine art. This research for expression was a special feature of the more emotional Germanic nations, and in spite of the almost comic peculiarities, there is a sincere reverence and religious feeling, which is almost unknown in any other school of ivory carving.

The series of chessmen made of walrus ivory that were found in the Island of Lewis should be mentioned here; they have stumpy figures and fine rugged countenances, and the thrones are carved with the elaborate tracery so typical of this artistic movement. The game of chess was early brought from the East, as was the game of draughts, and many pieces are to be found in the various museums of Europe. In addition to the chessmen, the British Museum possesses a fine set of draughts deeply carved in Romanesque style, with men and animals.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a specimen of a large and elaborate set of chessmen, having tiers of attendants round the principal figure. A charming story is told in one of the *Chansons de Gestes*, and was repeatedly carved on mirror covers and other small objects in the fourteenth century, showing the popularity of the game. It tells how the crusader Huon de Bordeaux was taken prisoner by the Saracen admiral and condemned to death; one chance was given him, that he should play a game of chess with the admiral's daughter, the most expert player of her day, the stakes being his life or the lady's hand;

## IVORY WORKERS

but it seems the lady looked too much in his eyes and too little at the game, and the result was one more convert to the Christian faith.

The tracery which decorates the thrones of the chessmen is a small example of the elaborate interlaced scrollwork, which is a leading feature in Keltic and Anglo-Saxon work. In the manuscripts it is often reduced to a series of calligraphic flourishes, but it also develops into serpents and dragons intricably woven together, and, later, more varied animal forms are introduced and even human figures are seen crushed in the serpentine rings. Forms from vegetation are rarely seen, and the introduction of the acanthus into these intricacies is due to the Carlovingian scribes of the ninth century and may be seen in the Bible written for Charles the Bald.

Several objects decorated with the earlier forms of this wild tracery are found in the great abbeys of Germany and Eastern France, and are thought to have been made in Great Britain or Ireland and brought over by the throng of missionaries who flocked on to the continent to convert the wild tribes of Frisia, Germany and Switzerland, bearing with them culture and learning.

Little Ireland in early days was a centre of artistic diffusion, almost more important for the Northern nations than that of Constantinople. Owing to freedom from invasion, Christianity and civilization had continued to flourish and the remnant of the old Latin literature was carefully pre-

## ANGLO-SAXON IVORY CARVINGS

served. Not long after the death of St. Patrick, the Irish Church, having increased in strength and learning, sent forth the famous St. Columba to minister to the hordes of barbarians who were over-running Britain. St. Columba met with great success and founded several large monasteries which became powerful centres of religion and learning in Scotland and England. For hundreds of years the schools of Ireland continued in great repute, numerous bands of missionaries were sent across the sea to convert the Germanic tribes on the continent. Most famous among these was St. Columbanus, who laboured in the East of France for many years, and afterwards in Switzerland and Italy, dying in 615 at the monastery he had founded at Bobbio. Everywhere these monks went they took with them the seeds of art and learning, beautiful illuminated manuscripts and other small works of art, which formed an inexhaustible store of *motifs* for the sculptors and goldsmiths of the following centuries. One of the disciples of Columbanus, St. Gall, who was called the "Apostle of Switzerland," founded there the great monastery named after him, which became a most flourishing art centre in later years.

The Anglo-Saxons were not idle, and in the eighth century St. Boniface and many others pierced far into the wild forests of Germany, founding the great monastic establishments which exist to this day. This was not a fleeting movement, but a close relation was kept up between England

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and the continent till well into the eleventh century.

### III. THE CARLOVINGIAN RENAISSANCE.

Charlemagne, crowned emperor in 800, if not perhaps the wondrous hero of tradition, was a very powerful factor in the history and civilization of his day, and exerted all his energy to introduce order and learning among the vast hordes of barbarians who more or less willingly acknowledged his rule. He stirred up all latent powers, introduced new ideas and stimulated an admiration for all Roman culture, being dazzled quite as much by the actual pomp and splendour of the Constantinopolitan court as by the memories of ancient Rome. He invited learned men from the East and the West, but the most famous were Alcuin, who was born at York, and his pupil, Eginhardt, who became Secretary and Chronicler to Charlemagne and his successor.

The Carlovingian renaissance was a most composite production. Byzantine Art had long been known to the Northern races, and at this time its influence was spread still further by the presence of artists exiled by the iconoclasts; but the Anglo-Saxon influence was even stronger, encouraged as it was by the bands of missionaries, and by Alcuin and his followers. To these intermingled strains must be added the independent Gallo-Roman reminiscence, the study of the monuments, and

## CARLOVINGIAN RENAISSANCE

also a strange, but undeniable Oriental tendency, arising from communications with the East and the Moors in Spain. This renaissance, though to a certain extent artificial, lasted for nearly three centuries and affected the civilization of the whole of Western Europe.

Carlovingian art flourished for centuries in Germany, but the invasions of the Normans checked for a while the artistic progress of Northern France. What little art they had was in much the same Norse style, but freshly barbaric and not like that of the British Isles, which had undergone centuries of incubation and had the additional Latin element.

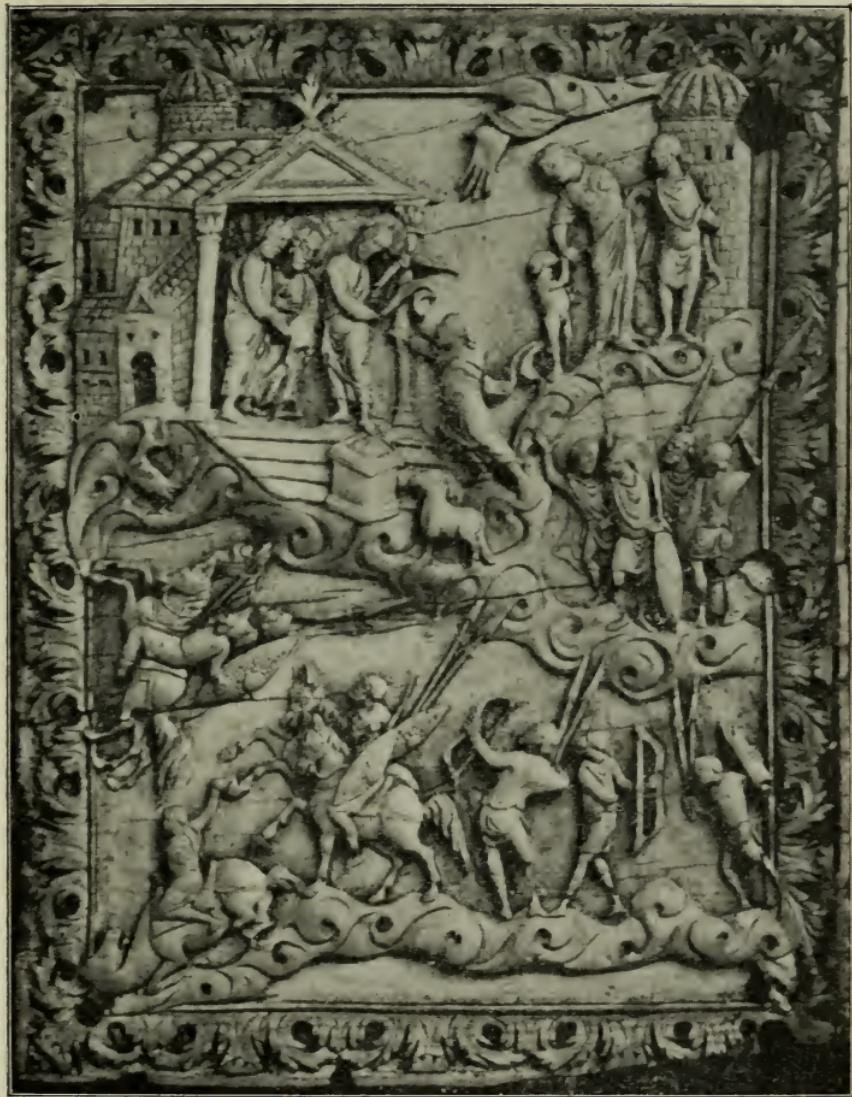
It was to this Anglo-Saxon Art, conventional as it had become, the human form often being reduced to a geometrical figure, that the Carlovingian craftsmen turned for inspiration. Two classes of ivory carving arose, one copied almost directly from the miniatures in the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which were themselves derived from late Roman types; and the second following more closely in the steps of the Byzantines.

All through the Carlovingian period there is a close connection between the illuminator and the ivory carver, the latter trying to treat his subjects more in the manner of a painter, enlarged the cycle of Christian representations and began to break with tradition and recover his liberty. The figures still, in many cases, retain the heavy and rather crushed forms of degenerate Roman art; and in the endeavour to impart deeper expression

## IVORY WORKERS

the proportions were often spoiled, delicate parts, as the features being delineated in undue size, and the research for originality often leading to violent and exaggerated attitudes, and to the overloading of detail, yet all the gestures are instinct with life, and full of a naïve directness of action.

A small plaque in the museum at Zurich (Fig. 22) is a good illustration of the immense influence of the miniatures on ivory carving. The Book of Psalms was especially popular, and this plaque is a word for word translation of certain verses of the XXVIIth Psalm (XXVI. in the Vulgate) into plastic form. *v. 2.* "When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." (The crowd of warriors, some of whom have fallen). *v. 5.* "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion : in the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me : he shall set me up upon a rock." (David is seen being welcomed into the Tabernacle, which stands on a rock). Part of *v. 6.* "Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy" (altar and lamb). *V. 10.* "When my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up" (in the right corner a man and woman turn away from a child). The hand above is typical of the protection of God which is asked for throughout the psalm. The slight and thin-ankled figures, and the continuous method of narration are characteristic of the miniatures, which originally derived their technique from late



[SCHWEIZERISCHER LANDESMUSEUM, ZURICH  
22. ILLUSTRATION OF PSALM XXVII  
Carlovingian, ninth century

## IVORY WORKERS

Roman Art, and carried on the old system of an unbroken series of scenes which is to be found in the *bas-reliefs* of Trajan's Column. In the Utrecht Psalter (Anglo-Saxon) is an almost identical illustration of this psalm, which proves that this plaque was copied from it or some analogous manuscript, as the Bodley Psalter (No. 603) in the British Museum. These Psalters have furnished a model for another of these scenic psalms, carved on a plaque set in the magnificent binding of the *Psalter of Charles the Bald*, in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris. The manuscript was written between the years 842-869, and there is no reason to think that the jewelled and ivory cover is not contemporary. One side gives a graphic picture of the LVIth Psalm, and the other represents Nathan telling David the story of the little ewe lamb (2 Sam. xii.). The Louvre possesses a plaque, also of the ninth century, representing the interview of Abner and Joab (2 Sam. ii.), a subject by no means of general interest, and unlikely to have a plastic type, which proves still further the custom of copying the miniatures with more or less servility.

One more scenic plaque in the Louvre is of interest, not so much in connection with the MSS., but from the strong resemblance to the Probianus diptych (Fig. 2), especially in the lower scene, where the figures raise their hands to Solomon on his judgment seat. On the second half David is dictating his psalms to an assembly of clerks.

## CARLOVINGIAN RENAISSANCE

It is difficult to class the ivories of this long period, but the majority are of German origin. Art and culture were a great deal dependent on the Court, which had the effect of bringing into line the work of craftsmen of very varying nationalities. Here also was a fear lest the people should worship the images themselves, but an iconoclastic spirit never arose, and these numerous carvings, besides adding to the sumptuousness of the cult, were used for the instruction of the unlettered.

Ivory was classed with the precious metals, and much sought after for ecclesiastical purposes, the great abbeys of eastern France and Germany became regular workshops, making a large number of exquisite objects in goldsmith's work and ivory. We are given a little side-light on the use of ivory in a letter of Eginhardt to his son, in which he mentions that he is sending him a carved ivory model of classical architecture that he should better understand certain passages in Vitruvius.

The mention of the work done in the monasteries brings us to the Abbey of St. Gall and the monk Tuotilo, who has long been the hero of the craft; but, alas, the charming picture that the chronicler Ekkehardt gives, a hundred years later, of this Leonardo among craftsmen is utterly without foundation; that there was a monk Tuotilo at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries the records of the monastery tell us, and a note added by a later hand says that he was learned and a sculptor.

## IVORY WORKERS

Ekkehardt spoils his argument in favour of Tuotilo by attributing to him too many perfections, and by finally quoting the opinion of Charlemagne, who had been dead and buried nearly a hundred years. It is very sad to have to give up the one real individual who greets us on the rather weary path of anonymity. The fine book cover, one leaf of which Ekkehardt attributes to Tuotilo (Fig. 23), is still safely preserved in the Abbey of St. Gall, but the two leaves appear to be by the same hand, though there is every reason to attribute the workmanship to the ninth century. On the upper leaf Christ is represented in glory, youthful and beardless in type, as is often the case in Carlovingian ivories which come from the Germanic part of the empire. There was a flourishing school of German craftsmen who closely imitated the ivories of the Italo-Byzantine school of the sixth century, the great abbeys having many specimens of ancient ivory carving in their treasuries. The two cherubim and Four Evangelists with their symbolic beasts are also strongly Byzantine; above are busts of the sun and moon and beneath the figures of Ocean and Earth. In fact, the arrangement is borrowed wholesale from a very frequent Carlovingian type of the crucifixion (Fig. 24), even to the little tombs which have no connection with the subject. The workmanship is delicate, but very conventional, and the concentric folds on this and on the second leaf, point to the influence of the manuscripts. The second leaf represents



SCHOBINGER AND  
SANDHERR PHOTO.

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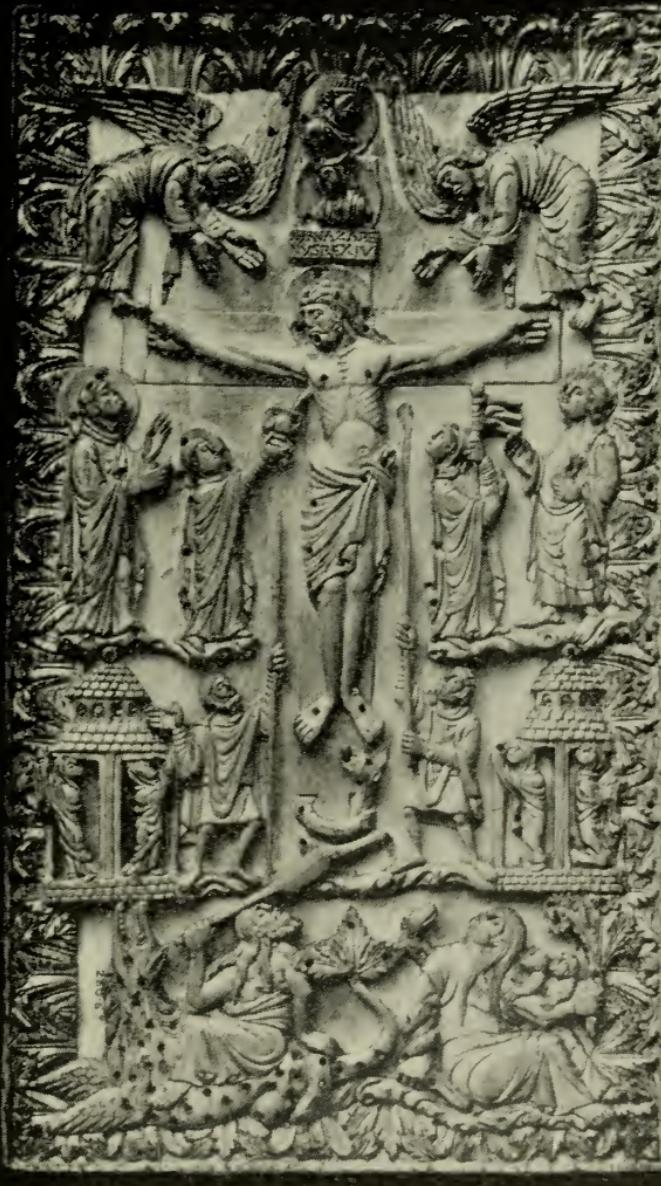
23. COVER OF A BOOK OF THE GOSPELS  
Carlovingian, ninth century

## IVORY WORKERS

the Assumption of the Virgin, the attitude is stiff and the drapery is terribly unreal, having almost the appearance of corrugated iron, but the movements of the angels are freer, especially the forward movement of the one on the Virgin's right.

The lower scene represents St. Gall taming the bears, which bring him bread whilst his companion sleeps. In this carving we see what the craftsman can do when left to himself; it is not a very artistic production, but it has a freshness entirely lacking in the other panels. The ornamental panels are splendidly carved, and recall the beautiful open-work panels on the book cover at Monza, which most probably belonged to Berenger, King of Italy in 888, and Emperor 916, and also the marble screens and balustrades which decorate so many Byzantine buildings. There are two more plaques at Cluny<sup>1</sup> which should be classed with these, and which are decorated with scroll-work containing figures of men fighting with satyrs and lions. The figures have a great likeness to those on the sixth century diptychs, especially the diptych in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg; and as that diptych formed part of the treasure of Metz Cathedral, it could easily have served as a model to the Carlovingian ivory workers. The rich border is of scroll-work with alternating rosettes and animals. The second plaque is still more like the Byzantine original, and this similarity has

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 1041-2, Cat. 1881.



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON  
24. CRUCIFIXION  
Carlovingian, ninth century

## IVORY WORKERS

caused many writers to differ with Molinier and class it among pure Byzantine work.

One of the most important ivories of the tenth century is the Frankfort book cover; the second leaf is still in the Library, but the other was in the late Spitzer Collection. It represents the large figure of *An Archbishop chanting the Psalms* in company with some smaller canons, the whole group being surrounded by a battlemented wall, probably that of the convent. The work is dry, but very exact and particularly interesting for the study of early ecclesiastical vestments, which are given with great detail. In the Frankfort leaf, the Archbishop celebrates the mass, surrounded by attendant priests and acolytes.

The numerous representations of the crucifixion of the ninth and tenth centuries can be roughly divided into two classes: those decidedly original and others copied from Byzantine models. The Carlovingian type is filled with symbolism, not altogether of Christian origin. These plaques are very numerous and all vary slightly. Fig. 24 is typical of a large number. The whole scene is emotional, all creation is moved, the sun and moon are represented with mournful faces, while the attendant angels weep bitterly; and below, the old pagan personifications of Earth and Sea bow their heads in sorrow. Stephaton with reed and sponge, and Longinus with his spear, stand on each side of the Cross, and the Virgin and St. John are always near. The two women carrying banners

## CARLOVINGIAN RENAISSANCE

are allegorical figures of the Church and the Synagogue<sup>1</sup> or the Old and New Dispensations; the banner of the latter is sometimes reversed and broken, while the Church in some renderings of the scene catches the blood of the Redeemer in a chalice. These figures seem to be the successors of the little cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the Early Christian mosaics, which likewise typified the Old and New Dispensations.

At the foot of the Cross is often rolled a serpent, emblem of Christ's triumph over Evil and Death; and on each side the dead are rising and stretching out their hands towards their Redeemer.

On the Metz book cover in the Bibliothèque nationale, Adam and Eve crouch beneath the feet of the Saviour. On the Brunswick casket, Sol and Luna are each depicted driving in a *biga* and bearing torches. On this Brunswick casket, and on one in the Berlin Museum, Christ is represented beardless, and the technique is close to the St. Gall book cover.

In the Carlovingian period the plaques are nearly always framed by a deeply cut acanthus border. Many of these carvings show traces of colour and others have been studded with gold nails, and portions incrusted with gold foil (Fig. 24). Two plaques in the Bargello have a charming additional border of tiny dots and beads inlaid with gold.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Paul Weber, *Geistliche Schauspiel und Kirchliche Kunst*.

## IVORY WORKERS

In the ivory plaque on the cover of the gospels which were presented by the Emperor Henry II. to the Abbey at Bamberg (now in the Munich Library), the stronger Byzantine influence is visible, the relief, also, is exceptionally deep, the figures of the two soldiers being almost detached, as in the purely Byzantine ivory of *The Death of the Virgin* in the same library. This Byzantine influence is also to be seen in *The Crucifixion* in the Musée de Cluny; the arrangement of this carving is more like a Reliquary of the True Cross, the four compartments being crowded with figures. The figure of Christ is robed in a flowing garment, as in many Byzantine renderings of the subject, and there is a greater delicacy of technique, showing the more intimate knowledge of Byzantine models.

The drapery on the Essen and Tongres plaques is particularly good, and they probably were carved in the same atelier.

### IV. GERMAN IVORY CARVING IN THE TIME OF THE OTTOS.

Otto the Great having consolidated his power in Germany, undertook, in 962, the classic expedition to Rome to be crowned Emperor of the West. An ivory tablet, now in the Trivulzio Collection at Milan, appears to commemorate that event. It represents Otto, his wife Adelheid, and their little son, kneeling at the feet of Christ, while their patron saints, Maurice and Mary, intercede for

## GERMAN IVORY CARVING

them, the name OTTO IMPERATOR being inscribed beneath. The apparent age of the young Otto, about seven years, would coincide with the date of the coronation, making this carving valuable for comparison with other German ivories, many being of far earlier date and closely connected with the Carlovingian, from which this characteristically German art slowly developed.

The style of the Trivulzio plaque is rude, the figures heavy and inclined to be coarse, but there is a largeness of design, the drapery being arranged in wide planes, and the energetic heads, with the typical long pointed beards and round cut hair, are of marked Germanic type.

With this certain knowledge of the German style in the second half of the tenth century, it is easier to turn back and examine the transitional period, which is represented by a series of caskets in the Louvre, Brunswick Museum, and the Bamberg Reliquary, half of which is at Munich, and half in the Berlin Museum.

The Louvre casket has many Carlovingian features, the long tiled roofs with slender columns are exactly like those in the Bible of Charles le Chauve (ninth century). That of Brunswick shows strong Byzantine influence, and the Bamberg casket is typical of the German imitations of Byzantine type; the forms have a greater fulness and a certain swing is introduced into the placid folds of the Byzantine drapery, a swing which develops into the gusty flutterings which are a curious

## IVORY WORKERS

characteristic of some of the German schools.<sup>1</sup> A gorgeous ivory casket is still preserved in the cathedral at Quedlinburg adorned with exquisite jewelled filigree work, and *repoussé* plaques. The plaques are in conventional Byzantine design, while the ivory sides of the casket are ornamented with seated figures and scenes from the gospels, of Byzantine inspiration it is true, but translated into the most colloquial German. Martin Luther might have sat as a model for the heavily built angel in the Easter Morning scene, and if this casket really dates back to the time of Henry the Fowler, whose gift it is said to have been, it proves that this German national art had existed as early as the second decade of the tenth century.

A most interesting series of square plaques belong to the second half of the century, and are much the same type as the Trivulzio tablet ; the figures are positively grotesque, with their peculiar cap-like hair, staring eyes, heavy features, and large unmodelled forms, yet there is such a sincere reverence and solemn earnestness about them, that the attention is forcibly arrested.

The Darmstadt plaque represents *Christ healing the Demoniac*, who is held, whilst the evil spirit struggles forth from his lips. The British Museum possesses an equally well-carved plaque with the *Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain*, the vertical

<sup>1</sup> See a plaque in the British Museum with the Nativity, and notably the Salutation.

## GERMAN IVORY CARVING

folds are finely fluted, and the features, though peculiar, are in no way coarse. The background of this plaque like one in the Berlin Museum, and another at Liverpool, is covered with a diaper of cruciform perforations, like those on St. Patrick's Bell and other early Irish antiquities. Christ is youthful and beardless on the Berlin plaque, which represents *Mary and Joseph finding Him in the Temple*. The technique in this and the remaining plaques at Liverpool is slightly coarser, but the style in all is identical. Christ alone is nimbed, and in each the figures have heavy masses of hair drawn back half over the ears, and strange solid robes, with the folded edge of the transverse drapery passing just below the knee.

Another very exceptional series, which must be the work of some Rhenish master at the end of the century, is intensely forcible in style; but the artist is already preoccupied with the technical effects of which he shows himself such a master. The cover of the Echternach codex, which is said to have belonged to the Empress Theophano, bears in the centre an ivory plaque representing Christ on the Cross, with Longinus and Stephaton. These bizarre figures seem to presage the whole future of German art, the love of descriptive figures, that evil should appear evil, and earthly things should have no heavenly aspect. Perhaps they carried their love of naturalism to extremes, and as heavenly things were few and far between, they also gained a strong earthly taint.

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The Crucifixion on a binding in the John Rylands Library at Manchester (Fig. 25) is evidently by the same artist. The grouping is purely Byzantine, but the severance of feeling is as far as the East is from the West. The gesture of the beloved disciple as he clasps his hands to control his passionate emotion, is worth all the stereotyped poses of Byzantine art, and one forgets the crudity of the whole thing in wonder at the emotion pent up in those rugged forms.

The clumsy features and moustache divided into two solid pieces, with the forceful attitudes and the peculiar drapery edged with an embroidered hem, are found again on several other carvings,<sup>1</sup> notably an aged figure of St. Paul in the Musée de Cluny. The bald head, wrinkled forehead, and the fulness of the drooping lids, are portrayed with wonderful realism in a wide and rough technique, the very reverse of the caressing finish of the contemporary Byzantine artist.

This contrast of German and Byzantine art on a book belonging to the Empress, raises the question of how much of the Byzantine influence was attributable to Theophano, grandchild of the artistic Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and sister of the Emperors Basil and Constantine.

After long hesitation on the part of the proud Byzantine Court, the German offer was accepted and Theophano, the delicately nurtured Porphy-

<sup>1</sup> See article by Dr. W. Vöge in the *Jahrbuch der kgl. preuss. Kunstsamml.*, 1899.



[JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY, MANCHESTER  
25. CRUCIFIXION  
German, tenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

genite, was married to that little boy we see kneeling by his mother's side on the Trivulzio tablet, and set forth on a journey to the savage wilds of Germany. Otto II. grew up to be an heroic dreamer, and on his early death, during one of his campaigns in Italy, the youthful Theophano claimed to be regent, and had a hard struggle for the rights of her young son, Otto III.

Theophano, whose grand figure stands out against a background of incredible rudeness and turbulence, must, undoubtedly, have had considerable influence in introducing the softer Byzantine manners. Her husband, Otto II., is said to have adopted much of the Byzantine court ceremonial, and the wedding presents she brought with her, on her arrival in 972, must have formed a fund of novel design for the German craftsmen. Yet it is very easy to exaggerate her personal influence. Byzantium had always been a remarkable civilizing agent, and in the tenth to eleventh centuries was exercising the strongest influence on the West. Relations with Germany had been established long before the time of Theophano, and were continued long after. In reality Otto III. was the more special admirer and imitator of Byzantine arts and customs, this influence coming, no doubt, indirectly from his mother's care in choosing for his masters, men of high culture. One of these men, the most trusted councillor of Theophano, was the refined and learned Greek, John of Calabria; and the other, the German, Bernward, was a most

## GERMAN IVORY CARVING

enthusiastic amateur of the arts, and on his appointment to the See of Hildesheim, helped to create the new German school which flourished all through the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In every museum there are examples of the Byzantino-German school, one branch of which was situated in the Rhine Provinces. The relief of the Rhenish carvings is usually bold, and the figures large and long, but they often lack both the spontaneity of the Germans and the elegance of the Byzantines. A charming representation of the *Nativity* encircled by an embattled wall, and another plaque with the *Visitation of the Magi*, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, show these features, the figures having almost the appearance of children's toys set out at random without the slightest relation to the background. A peculiar feature in some of these carvings, is the row of dots drilled down the centre of each fold. There was also a school of direct copiers of Byzantine carvings, which varies from the most miserable caricatures to such splendidly finished work, that critics experience great difficulty in deciding for or against the Byzantine origin. A case in point is the magnificent book cover in the Vatican, which came from the Abbey of Lorsch in Germany, and the similar panel in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The central figure of Christ on the Vatican panel has a wide smooth face (without a beard), as in the sixth century sculptures. The Virgin's face

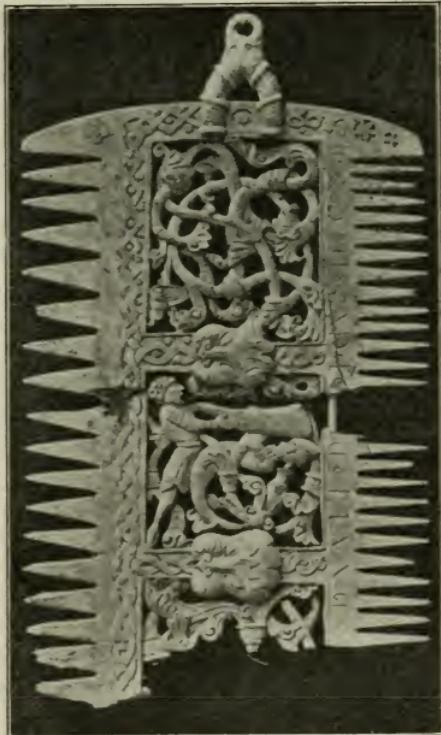
## IVORY WORKERS

is much narrower and more of the Byzantine type, and the robes are treated with a wonderful complexity of folds. Both these panels are divided like the five-piece diptych (Fig. 10, with a single figure on each side), and have a similar pair of flying angels above, and long narrow scene beneath. Westwood has attributed them to Italy in the sixth to eighth centuries, but that is impossible, as the actual technique is far more delicate than anything that could have been accomplished even in the sixth century. Molinier thinks it probable that the Vatican panel is an original from the finest period of Byzantine Art, and the English panel is an imitation by an almost contemporary German craftsman. The extraordinary similarity of technique, even down to such small details as the folds of drapery on the thighs of the standing figures, seems to point that the two panels came from the same atelier, even if they were not made for the same book cover, the latter seeming to be disproved owing to the slight variation in size and shape of some of the panels. The book cover in the Bodleian Library at Oxford is a variant of the panel in the Vatican.

Most of the small objects connected with ecclesiastical ceremonial are of this period, for instance the liturgic combs used by the bishop or officiating priest before celebrating high mass; the comb was a special feature in Anglo-Saxon ritual, and several have been found in Great Britain. The strange large comb in the British Museum is said to

## GERMAN IVORY CARVING

have been found in Wales, and is probably about the eleventh century (Fig. 26). It shows the later forms of the Anglo-Saxon scroll-work and has much in connection with Romanesque decoration. The comb of St. Gauzelin, Bishop of Toul is still preserved in the cathedral at Nancy, and the comb of St. Loup in the cathedral at Sens ; both betray strong Byzantine and oriental influence, and both date from the tenth century. These combs all have the more general arrangement of a double row of teeth, in two sizes ; but that attributed to St. Heribert (in Cologne Museum), has only one row, and is probably more ancient, as the grouping of the Crucifixion is like that on the Carlovingian plaques of the ninth century (Fig. 24). The *urcei*, or holy water stoups are usually of German origin. A magnificent example in Milan Cathedral bears the inscription of Gotfredus, Archbishop of



[BRITISH MUSEUM

26. CEREMONIAL COMB

English, eleventh century

## IVORY WORKERS

Milan, 973-978. It is very handsome in design, being surrounded by an arcade, above which rise the towers of the new Jerusalem. Underneath are seated the Virgin and Child and the Four Evangelists, modelled in the rather heavy German style of the tenth century.

Another *urceus* in the Hermitage Museum at St. Petersburg is of the same bucket shape, but ornamented with two tiers of arcades containing complicated scenes from the Passion. The Cathedral Treasury at Aix-la-Chapelle contains two of these *urcei* one of an octagon shape, each panel having two figures. The style of carving is like that of the school of ivory carvers founded by Bernward at Hildesheim in the eleventh century.

## CHAPTER IV

### ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC IVORIES

ROMANESQUE Art grew up north of the Alps in the valley of the Lower Rhone and South France, and is especially the work of the French people. The Italians led the way in the first centuries A.D., and were followed by the Greeks of Byzantium, and then by the Carlovingian Germanic peoples in the great art development of Europe; but from the eleventh century France entirely fills the stage, and this pre-eminence was kept up till the early Renaissance, when Italy again takes a leading part.

The Romanesque style was transitional, and turned for re-inspiration to the Gallo-Roman monuments, but it is deeply influenced by that northern spirit which later on triumphed in the full perfection of the Gothic Art.

There was a great revival of monumental sculpture with the growth of the Romanesque spirit, and sculptured figures, from being introduced tentatively in the capitals and other parts connected with the structure, later, entirely filled the great *tympana* or arches surmounting the doors of the

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churches, and from thence spread to every nook and cranny till in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were numbered by thousands.

Carved ivories are not so numerous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as in the years before, and when they became popular again, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the division between the sculptors in stone and the ivory workers had taken place, beautiful and clever imitations of the sculptures were turned out by the dozen, but it is exceedingly rare to find the work of a real artist.

The sculptures of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries have many details in common with the book cover at St. Gall (Fig. 23); but gradually the folds of the drapery grew vertical and the figures more drawn out, and with a peculiar tendency to arrange the hair in set curled locks. One of the most important transitional ivories is the diptych of St. Nicasius, Bishop of Rheims, which is preserved in the Cathedral of Tournai, and is still strongly Carlovingian, as will be seen in the typical representation of the Crucifixion. Each leaf has a central medallion, that on the first leaf containing the *Agnus Dei* supported by angels, whose movements can be closely paralleled in the St. Gall plaque. Above, Christ is throned in a mandorla and accompanied by the symbols of the four evangelists. On the second leaf, in addition to the medallion containing the figure of St. Nicasius are some pierced vine scrolls rather like those on

## ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC IVORIES

Fig. 23, and by far the best part of a very poor work. The drapery is, perhaps, better designed than in the Carlovingian sculptures, but the folds are only engraved, and though there is a certain change in the type of the faces, in the matter of beauty it is entirely for the worse. A plaque in the British Museum seems also to belong to this period, it is bordered by a flowered scroll and has representations of *The Nativity*, *The Announcement to the Shepherds* and *The Baptism*, the latter being very strange; the figure of Christ being immersed to the waist in a large vase.

The Romanesque age was, above all, the age of symbolism; the sculptures on the pastoral staves are full of hidden meaning. The *tau*, or crutch shape, is the earliest form and belonged, more especially, to the insignia



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, LONDON]

27. CROZIER  
French, fourteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

of the abbots, though in later days they also had croziers. The most ancient *tau*<sup>1</sup> belonged to Morard, Abbot of St. Germain de Près (990-1014) and is ornamented with a network pattern. Another fine *tau*, with the ends curling upwards and finished with lions' heads, belonged to Gérard, Bishop of Limoges.

The earlier croziers had a simple volute usually ending in a dragon's or serpent's head, with snapping jaws, which symbolizes the struggle between the serpent and the cross,<sup>2</sup> the latter being borne by the symbolic ram, a development of the *Agnus Dei*. This ram is the symbol of Christ; as St. Ambrose says, because he washes his fleece, guides the flock, clothes the shepherd, conquers the wolves by his strength and was the victim which replaced Isaac at the sacrifice, and again, because the ram is silent before the shearers, as Christ was before his judges, and finally the crozier curls like the horn of a ram, a symbol of force.

The famous crozier (so-called of "St. Gregory") in the Monastery of St. Gregory on the Cœlian Hill at Rome, shows the dragon's head, the ram bearing the cross and a strange little lion cub, which is a direct reference to the death and resurrection of Christ. In the natural history of the Middle Ages, which drew more on fancy than on

<sup>1</sup> See an article on Croziers by Cahier and Martin, *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, t. iv.

<sup>2</sup> See an article by Barbier de Montault, *Revue de l'Art Chrétien*, 1883, p. 157.

## ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC IVORIES

fact, it was narrated how the lion cub died at birth and could only be recalled to life by the breath of its father.

The Romanesque Church plunged even deeper into this symbolic thought, and the Pascal Taper, which signifies the life of Christ on earth was placed in a candelabrum supported by lions.

The strange pagan form, half human and half serpent, with a cock's head, is none other than the mystic Abraxas, whose name in Greek numerals represented in the elaborate Gnostic calculations the whole hierarchy of heaven and the Supreme Ruler of the Universe.

This symbol was supposed to have great talismanic powers to ward off evil, and though it was contrary to canonical rules, Gnostic gems engraved with the Abraxas deity were often set in the episcopal croziers, or even the crook was decorated with this mysterious symbol, as on the ivory crozier in the British Museum.

These croziers became more and more complicated in design, whole groups of figures were introduced and foliage of a freer pattern, as in the Staff of St. Ives, Bishop of Chartres, which is now in the Bargello at Florence. The Gothic artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries filled the volutes with figures and exquisite foliage, the groups of the Crucifixion and the Virgin in glory fitting back to back so accurately, that each side appeared perfect, and the join of the ivory volute on to the wooden staff was often

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hidden by a row of saints under delicate Gothic canopies.

The book cover of the Princess Melisanda, daughter of Baldwin II., King of Jerusalem († 1160), is preserved in the MS. Department of the British Museum; it is especially interesting as it shows the curious mixture of Byzantine, Arabian, and Western art which had been adopted by the Frankish rulers of the East, and which must have had considerable influence on French art. The upper panel is ornamented with representations of the six good actions, the principal actor being richly apparelled as a Byzantine *basileus*. These medallions are surrounded by a cord-like scroll, and the spaces are filled with struggling oriental animals, which symbolize the combat of the Virtues and Vices. On the lower leaf the medallions contain scenes from the life of King David and both panels are surrounded by a border of thoroughly oriental design.

Before entering on the subject of Gothic carvings, one class of bone caskets should be mentioned which are roughly carved in imitation of the Romanesque monumental style, with rows of tall figures under round arcades. Molinier thinks they are rather archaic than archaic, being made in Constantinople as late as the thirteenth century, from old models, and sold to contain the relics brought back from the East by the Crusaders.

There are examples in the Berlin Museum, the Louvre, and the Musée Cluny; the latter con-

## ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC IVORIES

tained the relics of St. Barnaby, and was the gift of Hugh, Abbot d'Estival and Bishop of Ptolemaïs in the thirteenth century.

The stages of development from the Romanesque to Gothic are almost imperceptible, and it is hard to say when the lingering classical traditions received their final transformation. The same breath which awakened the life in architecture freed the sculptor from the chains of custom, and we may consider the statues on the porch at Chartres as the commencement of modern sculpture. Like the Greeks, the Gothic artists formed a type by the process of selection from individuals. The new art was at first absolutely religious and simple, but the research for grace and the ever growing naturalism, mitigated, it is true, by extreme elegance and delicacy, gradually engrossed the entire mind of the artist and ended in the exclusion of all spirituality.

The ivory carvers long continued repeating the old formulæ, and it was only by the end of the thirteenth century that they commenced to copy the exquisite statues which decorated the new cathedrals in such numbers.

There are several examples of thirteenth century work still extremely old-fashioned in style, as the three little pierced plaques in the Louvre, representing the twelve apostles, accompanied by the favourite French saints, Denis, Rusticus and Eleutherius. The style is still transitional, but the forms of the foliage are freer, and a considerable

## IVORY WORKERS

modification of type is visible. The Virgin in the Collection Fillon is seated full face with the Child sitting equally on both knees, the stiffness of the pose being only relieved by a little freedom in the turn of the Child's head.

The marvellous impulse of religious enthusiasm, which, arising in the thirteenth century, became evident by the passionate fervour of the worship of the Virgin, and the multiplication of her images for public and private devotion. One of the most ideally noble representations is that in the group of *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the Louvre, (Fig. 28); it closely resembles the best sculpture in its severe lines, and was probably made about 1280. A hundred years later there is an entry in the Inventory of Charles V. which most probably refers to this group; it reads most quaintly in the old French. "*Item, ung courronnement de Nostre Seigneur à Nostre-Dame, d'yvire et trois angellotz de mesmes.*"

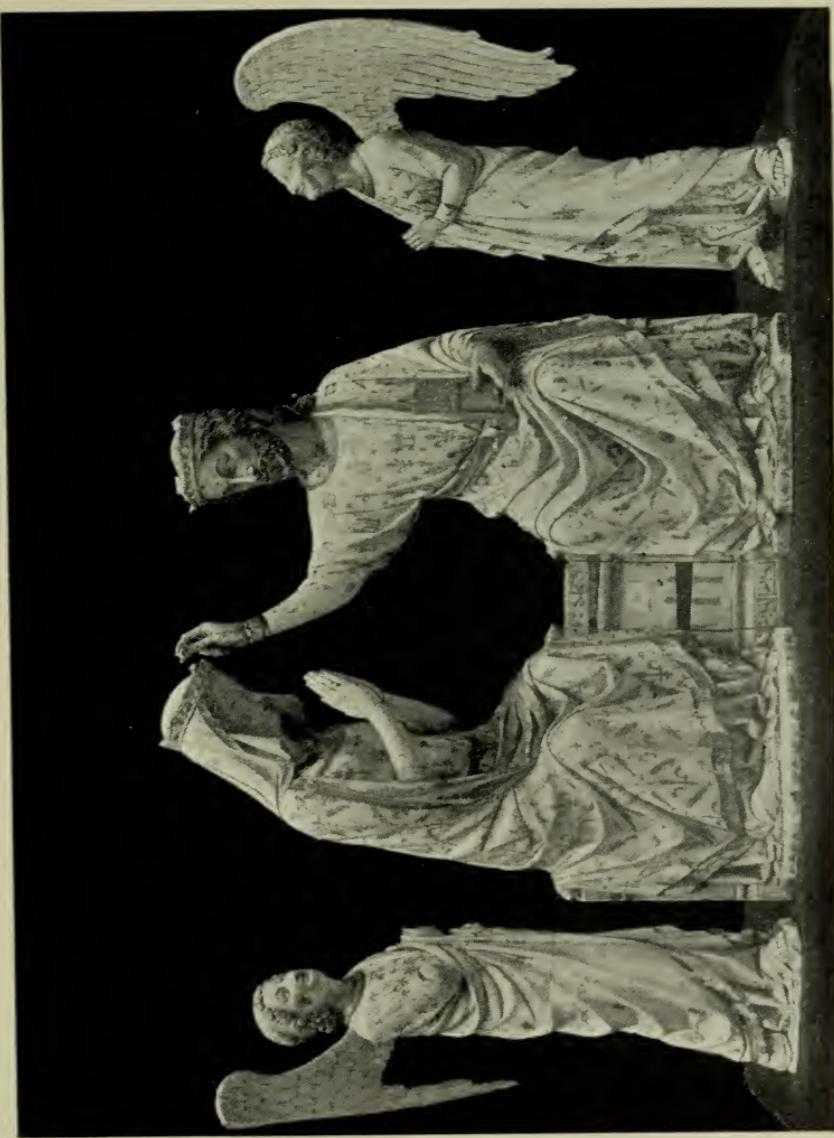
The earlier ivories were always painted, and much of the original colouring is preserved. The Virgin is dressed in rich robes, *semées de France* (as much in honour of the Royal House as of her attribute the "lily"), but she is utterly unconscious of self as she humbly bows her head to receive the crown. The two little ecstatic angels form a part of every group of the Glorification of the Virgin, either bearing tall candles, or with their hands raised in adoration.

There is hardly fifty years between this purely

[LOUVRE, PARIS

28. CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN  
End of thirteenth century

A. GIRAUDON PHOTO.]



## IVORY WORKERS

idealistic conception and the beautiful, but completely mundane *Vierge de la Sainte Chapelle* in the same collection. This magnificent figure is carved from one huge piece of ivory, and was probably the gift of St. Louis to his new chapel, about 1320. The masterly arrangement of the drapery and the exquisite finish make it one of the most celebrated ivories of the fourteenth century, but the old simplicity is quite gone, and the studied ease of the Virgin's pose is chosen to give value to every line of drapery and figure. There is a feeling of movement in all her being, which, with the beautiful broken folds of the drapery has within it the germ of that restlessness which, rapidly increasing, became a painful fault in later Gothic sculpture. The colouring is very delicate, the pupils of the eyes are dark ; the lips, which are just parting in a rather affected smile, are lightly touched with carmine, and a faint gilded border relieves the edges of the garments. The little seated figure of the Virgin in the Bargello (Fig. 29), is more direct and simple in design, and is probably of the last years of the thirteenth century.

The curve in many of these figures has been put down to the shape of the tusk ; this is no doubt the case in many examples, but the peculiar twist is first found in some of the stone figures of the Sainte Chapelle, where it seems to have been introduced as a contrast to the perpendicular shafts of the architecture, and the constant employment of this peculiar twist in the tiny figures of the



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

29. THE MADONNA AND CHILD  
Thirteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

ivory reliefs and in stone carving, proves it to be more a question of taste than necessity.

In the Paris Exposition of 1900 two lovely ivory figures were placed together and formed a group of the Annunciation. They belong to different private collections,<sup>1</sup> and have been beautifully illustrated in the splendid series of photogravures of the treasures in the *Exposition retrospective de l'Art français*. Whether they are by the hand of the same craftsman seems a matter of doubt, as the technique of the drapery varies somewhat; but nothing can equal the exquisite softness of the Virgin's robes and the dignified pose, worthy of the best work of the thirteenth century.

The ideal and pathetic group of *The Descent from the Cross* now in the Louvre (Fig. 30). It is strangely reminiscent in design, recalling the Byzantine rendering of the same subject in an eleventh century ivory, late in the Bonaffé Collection, in which the Virgin raises the hand of Christ to her lips with the same noble and restrained gesture, while His lifeless body slips helplessly down over the shoulder of Joseph of Arimathea. A similar group is sculptured in the Church of Le Bourget in Savoy, which is also useful in giving a clue to the fourth figure, which is evidently missing from the Louvre group.

Maskell, in the introductions to his *Catalogue of*

<sup>1</sup> The Angel belongs to M. G. Chalandon and the Virgin to M. P. Garnier.



A. GIRAUDON PHOTO.]

[LOUVRE, PARIS

30. THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

End of thirteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

*Ivories in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, refers to a small carving from the centre of a crozier which represents the Dead Christ on the knees of the Virgin, which is treated with strong but reserved feeling.

The series of religious *tableaux cloans* are very numerous, especially in the fourteenth century; they consist of two, three or more pieces and were intended for private devotions or as portable decorations for the various altars of a church, being taken with the cross and candles by the acolyte and placed on the altar for mass. The ornamentation was usually in tiers of little scenes, or with one large central figure (Fig. 31). The subjects have little variety and are taken from the Passion or the popular *Légende dorée*. The scenes usually follow in chronological order from the bottom of the left leaf to the corresponding corner on the right. The composition is often very confused, owing to the tendency to portray different stages of the same action in different compartments, to avoid placing figures on a second plane, and often the complicated architectural setting compelled the figures to be placed in contorted attitudes; in many representations of the Crucifixion the figure of Christ is strangely twisted to bring the head on a level with the other figures beneath the arcade.

A fine triptych of the thirteenth century, in the Collection Martin le Roy at Paris, is especially interesting, as it is an early example of the composition of the scenes of *The Death of the Virgin*,

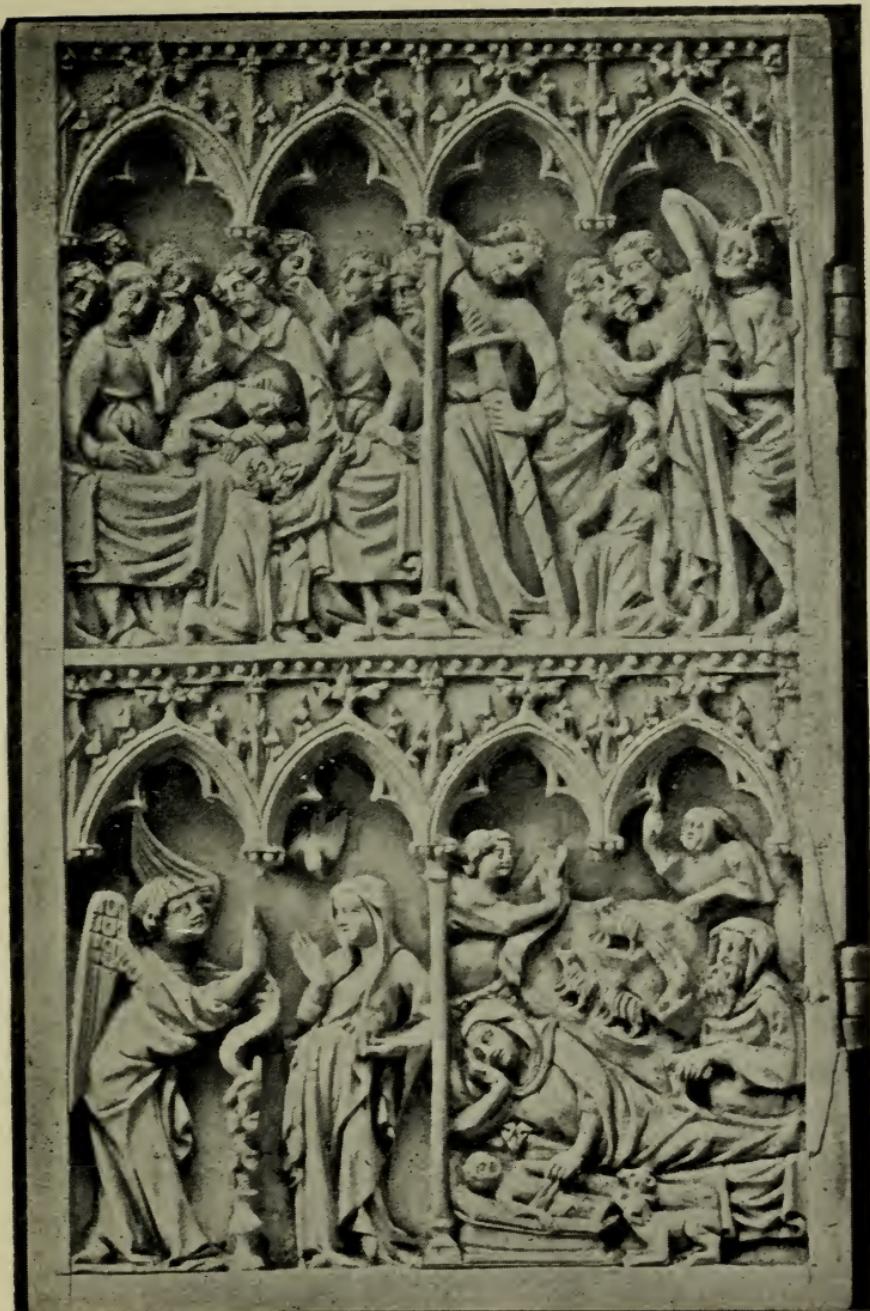


[VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON  
31. POLYPTYCH. VIRGIN AND CHILD—SCENES FROM  
THE NATIVITY  
French, fourteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

as described by Jaques Voragine in the *Légende dorée*, and it shows how the types hardly altered all through the succeeding century. The angel coming to the Virgin to announce her death brings her a palm from Paradise as a sign ; the group of men in uneasy attitudes are the apostles newly dropped from the clouds, having been collected from all parts to be present. The lowest scene of the central part is the most important ; in it the Virgin is lying dead, surrounded by the apostles, whilst the little naked soul is on the arm of Christ, Who raises His hand to bless the dead body. The whole imagery is the same as on the Byzantine ivory in the Library at Munich. In another part the body is borne away for burial. On the second register the Virgin rises in glory carrying a palm and book and accompanied by the most charming group of music-making angels ; above, she sits enthroned beside Christ and attended by the two candle-bearing angels.

The only known signed mediaeval ivory is a box in the British Museum which bears the name of *Jehan Nicolle*. In the Inventory of Charles V. the name of one ivory carver has survived, but he was also goldsmith to the king. “*Item, deux grans beaulx tableaux d'yvire des troys Maries que fist Jehan le Braellier, en ung estuy de cuir.*” These *estuys de cuir* were made of very beautiful tooled leather, two fine examples are in the Salting Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Reference is made to as many as three degrees of



[MAYER COLLECTION, LIVERPOOL MUSEUM

32. FIRST LEAF OF A DIPTYCH

French, fourteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

ivory carvers in the list of *mestiers and marchandise* of the town of Paris in 1258.

As the country grew more settled, riches and comfort increased, and once more the ivory carvers turned their attention to ornamenting the little objects of civil life, and we find exquisitely carved writing tablets, caskets and articles for the toilet, as combs, long hair wavers, and above all, the covers for the little metal mirrors that were worn hanging from the girdle. No self-respecting woman could dispense with these little luxuries, and in the lengthy *Miroir de Mariage* of Eustache Deschamps, one verse deals with the requirements of a wife:

*Pigne, tressoir, semblablement  
Et miroir, pour moy ordonner  
D'yvoire me devez donner,  
Et l'estuy qui soit noble et gent  
Pendre a cheannes d'argent.*

Quite a new range of subjects were introduced at the end of the thirteenth century, and in civil as in religious subjects the compositions were fixed and varied but little afterwards; though we know that about 1340 there was a complete change in dress, and the old-fashioned long loose robes, which fell in such soft folds were discarded for tighter and rather shorter garments; these are sometimes seen in social groups, as the games of *la mourre* and *la main chaude* (a sort of forfeits), which are carved on a pair of writing tablets in the Louvre. The subjects are nearly all from

## GOTHIC IVORIES

literary sources, the miniatures of the MSS. having once more furnished models for the ivory carver. There is a beautiful little casket in the British Museum with scenes from the romance of *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, and the delightful danc-



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

### 33. PLAQUE FROM A CASKET

French, fourteenth century

ing group in the Bargello (Fig. 33) formed part of a similar casket. The rhythmic flow of the soft rich drapery as the dancers move to the sound of music is exceedingly beautiful and the treatment broad, considering that the whole scene is contained in little more than six square inches. The

## IVORY WORKERS

figures are well proportioned, but with hardly any muscular development, and there is an entire absence of manliness in the male figures, who can only be recognized by the arrangement of the hair, the centre lock being cut across the forehead, and by the slightly shorter robes.

Scenes are taken from the *Lai d'Aristote* and the other so-called classical romances of *Jason*, *Alexander* and *Virgil*, the latter being described as a mediæval enchanter. Both he and poor Aristotle were most cruelly treated by their mistresses, the dignified Virgil being compelled to crawl on all fours while the lady rides on his back, and Aristotle fared even worse, being suspended in mid-air in a basket. The cycle of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are ever popular themes, especially the scene of *Tristan and Iseult* surprised by the reflection of King Mark in the fountain. *The Assault of the Castle of Love* was taken from an allegory in the *Romaunt de la Rose*. The knights ride up to force the gate or scale the battlements and are met with a shower of posies, but the fair garrison makes but a faint show of resistance, and the enemy is soon within.

Four lions or basilisks crawl along the outer edge of these mirrors for convenience in opening the circular cover. There are examples in all collections of these civil ivories, some of a perfectly marvellous delicacy and minuteness, and it is unnecessary to name any special examples, except, perhaps, a fine but broken mirror cover in the

## GOTHIC IVORIES

Musée de Cluny which is splendidly carved with the figures of a king and queen.



[MAYER COLLECTION, LIVERPOOL MUSEUM]

34. THE ELOPEMENT OF GUINIVERE  
French, fourteenth century

The art of Southern France had a peculiar local style, the figures being heavier and flabbier with

## IVORY WORKERS

little thought of the modelling of forms, which were thickly covered with brilliant paint; there is perhaps a greater freedom in the grouping of the figures.

By the end of the fourteenth century the Franco-Flemish influence appears, and art rapidly lost its delicacy in the attempts at realism.

A magnificent chess-board in the Bargello of the closely allied Burgundian school, is carved with a tourney and other festivities, and gives a good picture of the costumes of the fifteenth century. The beautiful ivory harp in the Louvre, and the prettily carved wand of the Lord High Falconer of England in the Liverpool Museum are some of the latest Gothic efforts before the advent of the Renaissance.

There is little to distinguish German ivories in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries from the French; perhaps there is a tendency to greater elaboration in the architecture, and on rare occasions the figures betray the German type; but in the fifteenth century the love of realism gained ground, and the ivory carvers more closely imitated the painters and the rapidly increasing school of wood carving.

The English were also profoundly influenced by the French Gothic art, but gradually worked out a style of their own. There was less monotony of design and a considerable modification of types, the figures becoming thinner and the faces graver, more earnest and sweeter in expression, though, at

## GOTHIC IVORIES

the same time, more realistic ; also there is a variation in certain details of the costumes. Two pierced plaques with scenes from *The Life of St. Agnes* which were in the Meyrick and Spitzer Collections, and a plaque representing Christ with the apostles, the group being surrounded by rich archi-



ALINARI PHOTO.]

[BARGELLO, FLORENCE

35. PANEL FROM A CASKET  
French, fourteenth century

tecture, and two other pierced plaques with scenes of the Passion, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, seem to be English work. In the Salting Collection, now in the same museum, is a deeply cut diptych of a strongly characteristic type representing the *Virgin and Child*, and *Christ teaching*; the figures are framed in architecture of an English

## IVORY WORKERS

type decorated with small heraldic roses. This diptych formed part of both the Soltykoff and Spitzer Collections.

The triptych in the British Museum (Fig. 36) is closely connected with it, and is said to have been carved for Bishop Grandison of Exeter (1327-1369), but Molinier thinks that the style is far nearer that of the early fifteenth century. In the British Museum there is also the wing of a diptych, in two divisions, with *The Annunciation*, and below, *John Baptist*; the other wing is in the Louvre and represents the *Coronation*, with *John the Evangelist* in the lower compartment.

Before closing this short survey, one small statuette in the Victoria and Albert Museum should be mentioned, as the sweet and affectionate earnestness of the Virgin's face is typical of the English ivories, for if far inferior to the French in actual technique, they have a depth of reverent feeling which is too often entirely wanting in the latter.

The Italian ivory workers continued long under the spell of the Byzantines, and when aroused to the fresh ideas of Gothic art, their work at first showed few features that could distinguish it from the French models. Gradually the designs became less concentrated and many differences crept in, especially in the treatment of the conventional foliage. The gorgeously coloured crozier in the Salting Collection is an example of this period; it belonged to Benci Aldobrandini, Bishop of Vol-



MANSELL PHOTO.]

[BRITISH MUSEUM

36. TRIPTYCH OF BISHOP GRANDISON OF EXETER  
English, fourteenth century

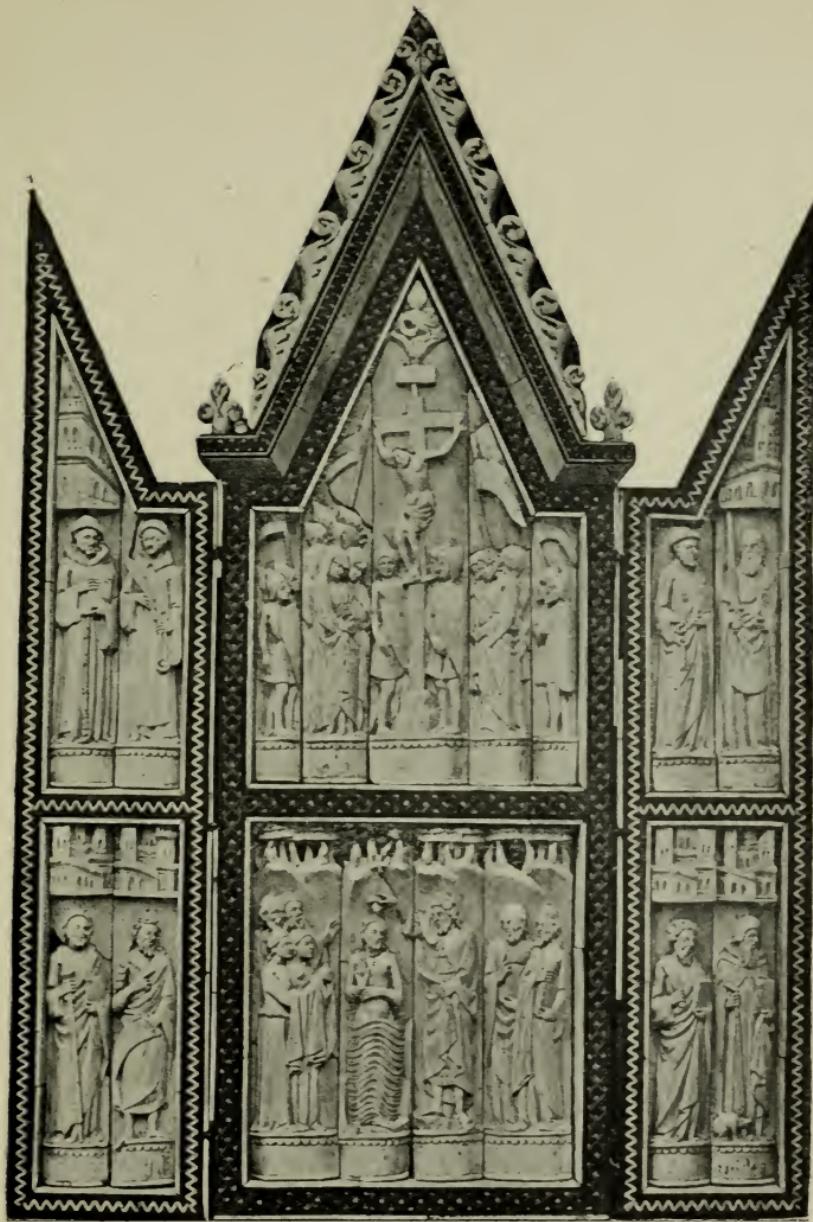
## IVORY WORKERS

terra in 1331. On the top is a half-length figure of Christ between two men; *The Adoration of the Magi* is figured within the crook, which emerges from the throat of a dragon, and just below, in four highly-painted shrines, sit the Evangelists.

In the late fourteenth century the Italians commenced an entirely original style of carving on narrow strips of bone. The figures with the scenic accessories are closely related to the early schools of painting. These sculptures, unlike the unmixed ivory of the French carvings, were always framed in narrow intarsia borders. Small triptychs (Fig. 37) developed into enormous size, as the great altar-piece in the old Sacristy at the Certosa at Pavia and the famous *retable* in the Louvre, which comes from the abbey of Poissy, and was the gift of the Duc de Berri, brother of Charles V., and one of the regents for the young Charles VI. in 1380. It contains his portrait and that of his wife, Jehanne de Bourgogne. The fragments of a third large *retable* still exist, divided between the John Rylands Library at Manchester and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

These *retables* are large in size, but not great in design, and though the groups of figures are lovely in detail, they are not impressive as a whole, the low relief giving little scope for the play of light and shade.

There are many beautiful polygonal caskets with domed covers, also combs and other small articles, and a very excellent account of the whole



[VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON  
LOAN COLLECTION HON. A. BERESFORD-HOPE, M.P.]

37. TRIPTYCHII IN CARVED BONE  
Italian, early fifteenth century

## IVORY WORKERS

series has been given by Julius v. Schlosser in the *Wiener Jahrbuch* for 1900.

This short account of the Ivory Workers of the Middle Ages commenced with Italy in the last years of the fourth century, and, having made the round of Europe, returns to her after a thousand years, at the end of the fourteenth century, and must close, just at the outgoing of the mediæval era, with this magnificent group of carvings, which lies half across the border line of the early and true Renascimento.

## LIST OF DIPTYCHS

FROM MOLINIER

### CONSULAR

1. About 400. [Probably] STILICHO.  
  {a. Stilicho, standing, armed, bearded.  
  {b. Serena and little Eucherius, standing.  
       *Tesorio della Basilica, Monza.*
2. 406. PROBUS. Rome.  
  {a. Emperor Honorius, standing, armed, with standard  
      and orb.  
  {b. Emperor Honorius, standing, armed, with shield  
      and spear.  
       *Cathedral Treasury, Aosta.*
3. 428. FELIX. Rome.  
  {a. Standing in trabea, bearded.  
  {b. Standing in chlamys.  
       *Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.*
4. 449. ASTURIAS. Rome.  
  a. Sitting on curule chair, two attendants (lost).  
  b. Same type (formerly at Liège).  
       *Darmstadt Museum.*
5. 487. BOETHIUS. Rome.  
  {a. Sitting, holding *mappa*.  
  {b. Standing.  
       *Museo Civico, Brescia.*
6. 488. SIVIDIUS. Rome.  
  a. Inscribed medallion and scrolls.  
       *Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.*  
  b. Inscribed medallion and scrolls (lost).

## IVORY WORKERS

7. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*{a. Consular type. Lions.  
b. Cons. type. Bears. National Museum, Zurich.}*
8. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. Cons. type. Bears (Basilewsky Coll.).  
Museum of the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.  
b. (Lost.)*
9. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. Cons. type. Gladiators.  
b. (Lost, or possibly pair to No. 10.)  
Besançon Museum.*
10. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. (Lost or possibly pair to No. 9.)  
b. Cons. type. Bull-fight (late Baudot Coll.).  
Musée de Cluny, Paris.*
11. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. and b. Crossed cornucopias. Biblioteca, Lucca.*
12. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. and b. Bust and scroll. Monogram.  
Trivulzio Collection, Milan.*
13. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. Same as No. 12. (Renaissance carving on back.)  
Louvre, Paris.*
14. 506. AREOBINDUS. Constantinople.  
*a. and b. Type of No. 12, without monogram (formerly in Treasury of St. Gaudenzio, Novara).  
Museo Civico, Bologna.*
15. 513. CLEMENTINUS. Constantinople.  
*a. and b. Cons. type. Monogram.  
Mayer Collection, Liverpool Museum.*
16. 515. ANTHEMIUS. Constantinople.  
*a. Cons. type (lost). (Formerly at Limoges.)*

## LIST OF DIPTYCHS

17. 517. ANASTASIUS. Constantinople.  
 {  
 a. Cons. type Bears.  
 b. Cons. type. Manumission of slaves, etc.  
*Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.*

18. 517. ANASTASIUS. Constantinople.  
 a. Cons. type (formerly at Liège). *Berlin Museum.*  
 b. Cons. type (broken), (formerly at Liège).  
*Victoria and Albert Museum,*  
*- South Kensington, London.*

19. 517. ANASTASIUS. Constantinople.  
 b. Type of No. 18. Two Amazons and jugglers.  
*Chapter Library, Verona.*

20. 517. ANASTASIUS. Constantinople.  
 b. Lower fragment, two Amazons and tumblers.  
*(Formerly Coll. Jauzé, lost.)*

21. 518. MAGNUS. Constantinople.  
 a. Cons. type (formerly at Leyden).  
*Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.*

22. 518. MAGNUS. Constantinople (attributed to).  
 a. Type of No. 21 (camel bone).  
 Re-inscribed PIO PRAESULE BALDRICO IUBENTE.  
*Mayer Collection, Liverpool Museum.*

23. 518. MAGNUS. Constantinople (attributed to).  
 a. Type of No. 21. Re-inscribed ARABONTI DEO  
 VOTA (formerly Basilewsky Coll.).  
*Hermitage, St. Petersburg.*

24. 518. MAGNUS. Constantinople (attributed to).  
 a. Type of No. 21. Changed to wrinkled old man.  
*Museo di Castello, Milan.*

26. 521. JUSTINIANUS. Constantinople.  
 a. and b. Inscribed medallion, four rosettes.  
*Trivulzio Collection, Milan.*

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27. 521. JUSTINIANUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Type of No. 26.  
Collection Sigismond Bordac.
28. 521. JUSTINIANUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* Type of No. 26 (formerly at Autun).  
Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.
29. 525. PHILOXENUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Three linked medallions (formerly in St. Corneille, Compiègne). Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.
30. 525. PHILOXENUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Inscribed octagon with scrolls.  
Trivulzio Collection, Milan.
31. 525. PHILOXENUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Type of No. 30.  
Mayer Collection, Liverpool Museum.
32. 525. PHILOXENUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Type of No. 30 (worn).  
Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.
33. [530?] LAMPADIUS. Constantinople.  
Consul behind cancelli. Chariot Race.  
Museo Civico, Brescia.
34. 530. ORESTES. Rome.  
*a.* and *b.* Cons. type. Two Servants.  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
35. 539. ARION. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Bust and scrolls.  
Chapter House of Orviedo Cathedral, Spain.
36. 540. JUSTINUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* and *b.* Bust and scrolls. Three medallions. Two servants.  
Berlin Museum.
37. 541. BASILIUS. Constantinople.  
*a.* Consul and Constantinople.  
*b.* Victory.  
Castello, Milan.  
Uffizi, Florence.

## LIST OF DIPTYCHS

### ANONYMOUS CONSULAR DIPTYCHS

38. V. cent.  
    { a. Consul and friends; above, imperial figures enthroned; below, barbarians.  
    { b. Repeated with variations.  
                *Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt.*
39. V.-VI. cent.  
    a. Consul and two attendants. Below, large scene, leopard fight.  
    b. Consul and two attendants. Below, large scene, lions (formerly in Cathedral Treasury).  
                *Bourges Museum.*
40. V.-VI. cent. So-called Apotheosis of Romulus.  
    Consul borne to Heaven in chariot.  
                *British Museum.*
41. VI. cent.  
    b. Bust in garland, four rosettes.  
                *Biblioteca Barbarini, Rome.*
42. VI. cent. Two worn fragments of a diptych.  
    Cons. type. (Later carving on back.)  
                *Victoria and Albert Museum.*  
                *British Museum.*
43. VI. cent. Bust and scrolls.  
    Type of No. 12. Camel bone.  
                *Mayer Collection, Liverpool Museum.*
44. VI. cent.  
    { a. Cons. type, sitting.  
    { b. Cons. type, standing.  
                Changed to St. Gregory and King David.  
                *Tesorio della Basilica, Monza.*
45. VI. cent. Cons. type, changed to St. Peter.  
                *Library of the Metropolitan Chapter House, Prague.*

## IVORY WORKERS

46, 47, 48, 49. VI. cent. Five-piece diptych.

(46) Top. Flying figures.

(47) Bottom. Barbarians.

*Trivulzio Collection, Milan.*

(48) Top. Flying figures.

*Basle Museum.*

(49) Right side. Consul and Victory.

*Munich Library.*

## OFFICIAL DIPTYCHS

50. End of IV. or commencement of V. cent. *Probianus.*  
Vice-prefect of Rome.

{a. Sitting, delivering justice. Below, two litigants.  
b. Sitting with scroll. Below, two litigants.

*Berlin Library.*

51. V.-VI. cent.

Above, type of No. 33. Below, fight with elans.

*Mayer Collection, Liverpool Museum.*

52. V.-VI. cent.

a. and b. Games in Circus (varied), (formerly in  
Basilewsky Coll.). *Hermitage, St. Petersburg.*

53. VI. cent.

{a. Rome carrying orb and spear.

{b. Constantinople carrying cornucopia and palm.  
Later inscription *Temperancia* and *Castitas.*

*Cabinet of Antiquities, Vienna Museum.*

54. VI. cent.

{a. A bald man standing half under a porch.

{b. Slightly varied pose.

*Cathedral Treasury, Novara.*

55. VI. cent. Standing figure.

*Museo Civico, Bologna.*

56. VI. cent. Muse, standing (broken, found at Trèves).

*Berlin Museum.*

## LIST OF DIPTYCHS

57. VI. cent. (?)  
a. Figure, sitting. *Cabinet of Antiquities, Vienna.*  
b. Figure, standing. *Bargello, Florence.*

## PRIVATE DIPTYCHS

58. End of IV. or commencement of V. cent.  
a. Nicomachorum. Draped figure and torch.  
*Musée de Cluny, Paris.*  
b. Symmachorum. Draped figure and altar.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*
59. V.-VI. cent.  
a. Hippolytus and Phaedra.  
b. Diana and Endymion. *Museo Civico, Brescia.*
60. VI. cent. Two registers. Dioscuri. Europa and  
the Bull. *Trieste Museum.*
61. VI. cent.  
a. Æsculapius.  
b. Hygeia. *Mayer Collection, Liverpool.*
62. VI. cent.  
a. Muse with lyre.  
b. Poet. *Tesorio della Basilica, Monza.*
63. VI. cent.  
a. and b. Authors and Muses, varied poses.
64. VI. cent.  
a. Bacchus Helios.  
b. Diana Lucifera (formerly in the Cathedral Treasury). *Sens Museum.*
65. VI. cent. Three registers. Apollo and the Muses  
(broken). *Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.*



## LIST OF MUSEUMS

The following Museums are richest in Mediæval Ivory Carving.

### *Austria.*

VIENNA. (Cabinet des Antiques), K. K. Oesterreich-isches Museum.

### *England.*

LONDON. British Museum.

Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.  
(This museum has a large collection of Fictile Ivories.)

Salting Loan Collection.

LIVERPOOL. Mayer Collection.

Free Public Museum.

MANCHESTER. John Rylands Library. (Late Crawford Collection.)

OXFORD. Bodleian Library.

### *France.*

PARIS. Bibliothèque na- { Cabinet des Médailles.  
tionale { Département des MSS.

Musée de Cluny.

Musée du Louvre.

### *German Empire.*

BERLIN. Kunstkammer. K. Museum.  
K. Bibliothek.

MUNICH. K. Staats-Bibliothek.  
National Bavarian Museum.

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### *Italy.*

BOLOGNA. Museo Civico.

BRESCIA. Museo Civico.

FLORENCE. Muzeo nazionale. Bargello.

MILAN. Museo archeologico. Castello.

Tesorio del Duomo.

MONZA. Tesorio della Basilica.

RAVENNA. Museo Civico.

Duomo.

ROME. Biblioteca Barbarini.

Museo Kircheriano (Collegio Romano).

Vatican. { Museo cristiano.  
                  } Biblioteca.

For the study of Ivory Carvings M. Molinier gives a full bibliography in his work on *Ivoires*.

For illustrations. Garucci, vol. vi. and the Collections of Photographs published by Dr. Graeven.

Fictile Ivories for sale, see Oldfield's Catalogue.

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